Catholick Religion:

OR, THE

JUST TEST

OR

CHARACTER

Of every Person that in any Nation is accepted with God: Discovered,

IN

An Explication of the Nature of the true fear of God, and working of Righteousness, with which the same is connected. In some Discourses upon *Acts* 10. 35, 36.

WHEREIN

Several important Doctrinal Truths, more immediately influential upon practise, are plainly opened, and vindicated from their too common misunderstanding.

By *WILLIAM MANNING.*

Happy is the man that feareth alway, Prov. 28. 14.

LONDON:

Printed for *Dorman Newman*, at the Kings Arms in the *Poultrey*, 1686.

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ERRATA.

PAge 1. line 12. dele *may*, p. 2. l. 10. d. *Preached Christs Death*, put in *proceedeth*, l. 17. r. *the Gentiles*, l. 20. r. *Cohort*, p. 10. l. 1. r. *Oeconomy*, p. 20. l. 8. r. *Mat.* 7. p. 33. l. 4. r. their, p. 41. l. 4. r. *it meaneth*, p. 57. l. 25. r. *Sinaios*, p. 68. l. 22. r. *its assigned*, p. 69. l. 11. r. *Nation*, l. 27. r. *Mans*, p. 90. l. 16. d. *and*, p. 92. l. 12. r. *now*, p. 93. l. 17. r. *attemperation*, p. 98. l. 13. d. *as*, p. 102. l. 21. r. *unreserved*, p. 118. l. 3. r. *is*, p. 133. l. 16. r. *convert*, p. 153. l. 11. r. *I say*, l. 28. r. *thou*, p. 156. l. 11. d. *but*, l. 12. d. *that they are*, p. 158. l. 3. r. *awaiting*, p. 161. l. 25. r. *on*, p. 163. l. 16. d. *nay*.

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ACTS X. 34, 35.

Then Peter *opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation, he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.*

THIS Chapter gives us the first account of the Apostles Preaching the Gospel unto and Converse with the Gentiles; amongst whom, *Cornelius* and his Houshold are mentioned as a kind of first Fruits of them, given in unto Christ. The whole Story is very Remarkable; and many useful Instructions doth the Context and Coherence offer to our consideration; some few whereof it may [illegible] not be amiss to gather up, and

briefly to insist upon, in our way to the Text.

In the first place, its worthy our notice and consideration, who or what this *Cornelius* was, the Subject immediately concerned in the Apostles Discourse; since that the witness which he obtained of God, touching his Acceptance of him, is the Foundation whereupon St. *Peter* Preached Christs Death unto his General Conclusion, or Inference, That in every Nation, &c. × proceedeth

Of that, the first Verse gives us an account; and therein both of the freeness, and exuberancy of the Grace and Goodness of God to Sinners, even of the *Gentiles*. Why, he was a *Roman* Soldier, a *Centurion*, *i. e.* Captain of a Hundred Footmen, of the *Italian* Squadron or *Cohort*, consisting of about Six hundred Men, and which was the tenth part of a Legion. They were Heathen; nor was he himself Proselited to the *Jews* Religion (as is Evident in the Sequel of the Discourse) tho he might in that degenerate Age yet have help to light his Candle from them. He lived in *Cesaria*, a City of the *Jews*, (the Scepter

er being then departed from *Judah*), as his Station allotted to him by the *Roman* Powers, to keep Garison upon them, and to hold them in subjection; and what the Temper and Religion, (or rapine rather) of such Military Persons ordinarily is, or hath been in such circumstances, all the World knows.

Now, it's not so much matter of wonderment, that in every Nation, all that fear God should be accepted of him; as this, that so singular Humanity, Benignity, Charity, Piety, and true Devotion, should to such a Degree be found in a person of such a Nation, without God in the World, devoted to Idolatry in a Stranger born to the Covenant of Promise; his Place or Station also considered, and the disadvantage of his Education preponderating against it.

Surely he was more than in an ordinary way indebted to the Grace of God; no less than St. *Paul* was, who, tho a *Jew* in Religion, yet being withal a Blasphemer, a Persecutor, and Injurious, (an instance of another kind), when called by the Grace of God, *Gal.* 1. 5. He could not but speak his resentment of

it, as ſuperabundant toward him, 1 *Tim.* 1. 14. as was the Mercy of God, which thereupon he obtained of him, *v.* 16.

Now, as that ſo remarkable inſtance of the Grace and Mercy of God toward the Apoſtle *Paul*, was in the intention of God, πρὸς ὑποτύπωσιν, for type or exemplar ſake, as himſelf noteth; for a pattern to them which hereafter ſhould believe to Life Everlaſting; to remove all diſcouragement in any, in the like caſes, labouring under the ſenſe of Heinous Guilt: So is this Inſtance of *Cornelius* brought into Example, firſt to ſhew how that God out of any Nation, Kindred, Quality, or Condition of Perſons otherwiſe, can ſelect a People to himſelf, and Implant his Fear in their Heart; and then, that having ſo done, he will never fail, be their outward circumſtances what they will, to teſtify his acceptance of them.

Cornelius his Character for Piety (notwithſtanding the diſadvantages that lay in his way) ſummarily mentioned, *v.* 2. will fall in particularly hereafter to be handled.

Gods ſpecial care in the mean while over him, whilſt he is found in the way of his Duty, we have Exemplified, *v.* 3. 5. in his directing an Angel in a Viſion to ſpeak to him, that he ſhould ſend for *Peter*, that he might open unto him more fully the way of Salvation, *Chap.* 11. 14. which as yet he was not inſtructed in.

But there was a *Remora* in *Peters* way, which muſt be removed. He could not converſe with a *Gentile*; and ſuch a one was *Cornelius*.

The caſe thus ſtood: Time was, and that but now, that the *Jews* were the only choſen People of God, *Deut.* 7. 6, 7. whilſt the *Gentiles* were no People of his. They were nigh unto him; theſe afar off, *Eph.* 2. 17. They were a People Holy to the Lord; theſe a People common, and prophane, *Gal.* 2. 15. They a peculiar Covenant People, *Rom.* 9. 4. we *Gentiles*, aliens to the advantage thereof, *Eph.* 2. 12. Conſequently they were nearer to Salvation than we; comparatively Salvation was of them, *John* 4. 22. whilſt we were without hope, *Eph.* 2. 12. beyond the Line, ſitting in darkneſs, and

in the ſhadow of Death, *Luk.* 1. 79. 1 *Theſ.* 2. 16. nor were there any Commiſſionated to gather in the Nations of the *Gentiles* then.

This Difference, the Pious *Jews*, and even the Apoſtles themſelves thought ſhould continue; yea and ſuch a diſtance, as that they thought they might not Lawfully eat with a *Gentile*. This was a common received opinion among them, and known to other Nations, as appears by the Woman of *Samaria* her Reply to Chriſt, *John* 4. 9. (tho but of Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitution, that we find); how ſeverely did the Apoſtles, and Brethren, they of the Circumciſion contend with *Peter* after this, about it, *Chap.* 11. 2? they were of opinion, that under the Meſſias, the *Jews* Church-State was to be continued and enlarged; that men muſt turn *Jews*, or they could not be Saved; that the gathering in of the People, muſt be unto them. Of this perſwaſion was *Peter* himſelf as yet, till better inlightned, *v.* 26.

It's true, multitudes of Prophecies were Extant in the Sacred Records, of the gathering of the *Gentiles* unto Chriſt,

of

of whole Nations and Kingdoms of them: Such as ſpake of his *ſprinkling* many Nations, *Iſa.* 52. 15. Of *giving* him a Portion with the great, *ch.* 53. 12. That *Kings* ſhould be Nurſing-Fathers, when God ſhould lift up his hand to the *Gentiles*, and ſet up his Standard to the People, *ch.* 49. 22, 23. *That* every man ſhould worſhip him from his place, even all the Iſles of the Heathen, *Zeph.* 2. 11. *That* God would call them his people, that were not his people, *Hoſ.* 1. 10. And many Nations ſhould be joined to the Lord, and ſhould be his people, *Zech.* 2. 11. Till *his Dominion* ſhould be from the River, even to the ends of the Earth, *ch.* 9. 10. *And* his Name become great among the *Gentiles*, from the riſing of the Sun, even to the going down of the ſame, *Mal.* 1. 11. *Pſal.* 22. 27, 28. & 68. 9.

But their Caſe was not much unlike to the *Ethiopian Eunuchs*, Acts 8. 31. they wanted an Interpreter; and no wonder, when the Vail (if I miſtake not) is not yet done away on the minds of the generality of men, both learned and pious, in the reading of the Scriptures, which

ſpeak of the Kingdom of God, or of Chriſt here in this World, or of the external Church-State of the *Gentiles*: whilſt not doubting but that Salvation is of them, or that Gods Election runs among them, they yet interpret all the Scriptures (ſuch as theſe forementioned) of the Myſtical Church State of the *Gentiles*; or which yet is more wide, would have them to ſpeak of a viſible Church-State only of the *Gentile* Nations, or of their becoming only viſibly a People to the Lord, ſo far as concern the whole bulk of the unregenerate; at leaſt or of a Kingdom to be erected unto Chriſt, of viſible Saints, or of perſons in viſibility, or in *foro humano* pious; which hath no footing at all in the Scriptures; ſomething real doth *ſub eſſe*, reſpecting the whole.

To proceed in the Story.

The time was now come, that the Wall of Partition between the *Jew* and *Gentile* was to be broken down, *Eph.* 2. 14. All were to be gathered up under a new Head, and the *Gentiles* no longer to remain afar off, as ſtrangers, *v.* 19. but to become fellow Heirs, and of the ſame

body,

body, *ch.* 3. 6. Now was *Abraham* to become Heir of the World, *Rom.* 4. 13. And the *Gentile* Nations to be discipled, *Mat.* 28. 19. and grafted in amongst the *Jews*, or in their room, into the *Olive* Tree, or Covenant of *Abraham*; no longer neither they nor their Children to be accounted common or unclean, *Rom.* 11. 16, 17. 1 *Cor.* 7. 14. If consequently they embraced the Gospel, they stood upon even terms with the *Jew*, in the point of Salvation as nigh as they; and accordingly Conversation might be held with them in order to it; tho it was meet that the *Jews* should have the Preheminence of the first tender, as they had on the account of their antecedent covenant-relation to God, *Acts.* 3. 25, 26. *Job.* 1. 11. *Acts* 13. 46 *Matt.* 10. 6.

This was a Mystery which in other Ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as now it is, saith the Apostle, *Eph.* 3. 5, 9, And here it was that *Peter* stuck, as was said, notwithstanding the Prophesies of old, and last Instructions of Christ, *Mar.* 16. 15. *Acts* 1. 8. given to the Apostles; yet he could not get over it; still two things lay in his way; the one relating

ting to the external Oeconomy of the Kingdom of God, which he thought ſhould ſtill be confined to the narrow compaſs of one ſingle Nation, the Common-Wealth of *Iſrael*, (little thinking, that the Children of the Kingdom rather ſhould be ſhut out, *Mat.* 8. 12. or the Kingdom of God ſhould be taken from them, and given to other Nations, *ch.* 21. 43.) Hence it was that he accounted it unlawful (as was ſaid) to keep company with one of another Nation, *v.* 28. whereof eating was a ſymbol alſo; or to preach the Goſpel to them; to the *Jews* belonged the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promiſes, *Rom.* 9. and he doubted not of going unto the loſt Sheep of the Houſe of *Iſrael*, tho otherwiſe wicked, but of giving the childrens Bread unto Dogs; or of the enlarging the ſheepfold unto the *Gentile* Nations. The other Obſtacle in his way was a prepoſſeſſion of mind, reſpecting the future ſtate of Perſons; he doubted, it ſeems, of Gods acceptance of any of the *Gentiles* unto Life Eternal; being ſtrangers to the advantages of the Covenants of Promiſe, whereof the *Jews* were

were the Heirs, whether or no in any ſingle Inſtance, any one of them could be in favour with God.

The method which God took to convince *Peter*, was extraordinary; the account whereof beginneth at *ver.* 9. he went up to pray, about the ſixth Hour; that is, at noon-time, according to the computation of the *Jews*; at which time being very hungry, while they made ready, he fell into a Trance, and in a Viſion he ſaw Heaven opened, and a Veſſel deſcending unto him, wherein were all manner of Beaſts, *&c.* Amongſt which were unclean meats, prohibited by the Law of God for a *Jew* to eat of them; and yet there came a Voice to him, Riſe *Peter*, kill and eat, *v.* 13. this he regreted as a thing which he had never done; but the Voice anſwered him again, *What God hath cleanſed, that call not thou common*, *v.* 15. this being interpreted to him, not only to relate unto meats, but unto men alſo, that he ſhould not call any man common or unclean, *v.* 29. he was now fully ſatisfied in his mind, and ſo continued: However after this, through his too much Condeſcention for Peace ſake,

or prepoſterous fear of offence to ſome leading good people, he ſometimes diſſembled it, and led others into the ſame, for the which he received a ſevere check from the Apoſtle *Paul*, Gal. 2. 11, 12.

Now was the Apoſtolical Commiſſion broken up, and opened unto him; and the Viſion had been thrice doubled unto him for the more Aſſurance; hereupon *Peter* forthwith goes to *Cornelius*, taking along with him certain of the Brethren; whom *Cornelius* meeting, fell down at his feet, *v.* 25. whom *Peter* firſt corrects for his too much Worſhip or Reverence giving unto him, tho an Apoſtle or Miniſter of Chriſt, being but a man, *v.* 26. and then proceeds to his diſcourſe: Firſt by way of Apology for himſelf, leſt *Cornelius* ſhould ſuſpect him to do what he did with an evil Conſcience againſt the Law of God, or manner of the Fathers; he clears himſelf by ſhewing his Warrant from Heaven for his coming unto him, *v.* 28. which when *Cornelius* himſelf had confirmed by the like Teſtimony recited by him, and declared with what earneſt expectation they were there met before God, to hear what Meſſage

it

it was that he had commanded him of God to deliver unto him; *Peter* goes on directly to the matter in the Words of the Text: Which Words contain a general Inference from what goes before, and are but introductory unto what he immediately ſubjoins.

Then Peter opened his mouth; which Phraſe of Speech in Scripture importeth much ſerioutneſs in the delivery of ſome weighty matter; *and* he *ſaid*, *Of a truth I perceive*; now I do aſſuredly underſtand. What was that he was ſo clearly convinced of? Why, *that God is no* accepter or *reſpecter of perſons*: but in what regard, or to what purpoſe is he not ſo? Why, in the point of acceptance unto Life: *But in every nation*, ſaith he, be they *Jew* or *Gentile*, Circumciſed or not, *he that feareth him, and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted with him.*

It's the latter part, contained in *v.* 35. that I have deſigned mainly to inſiſt upon, and therefore ſhall but briefly touch upon the opening of the former in our way, to give light thereunto: Nor need there much to be added to what hath already been ſpoken, for the underſtanding

ing of the ſenſe of the Apoſtle, or for the confirmation of the Truth by him inferred and aſſerted in thoſe Words, *That God is no reſpecter of perſons.*

Reſpect of Perſons muſt relate to ſomething as the Reaſon or Motive, and that may be either ſomething of *Internal* Qualification in the Subject, or of *Extrinſick* difference of State or Condition.

There is alſo a double Reſpect of God unto men, in the communication of his Goodneſs to them, to be conſidered.

1. That of his proviſion of a Remedy for Mankind in general, in his counſel of peace, *Zech.* 6. 13. And giving of his Son unto death for them, *John* 3. 16. *Heb.* 2. 9. Opening unto lapſed man a door of hope, whilſt the Angels fallen, were paſſed by, *v.* 16. And the conditional grant of acceptance unto all thereupon, by the Goſpel, *Heb.* 9. 15. This in the whole contrivance thereof was without all reſpect of perſons *abſolutely*, *i. e.* without regard unto any thing without or within them lovely, as the reaſon thereof: Yea, Mankind, *ut in eſſe cognito*, were all alike conſidered, as Enemies and

and Rebels, *Rom.* 5. 6, 8. No foundation was left for it. So likewise for his communication of Grace unto this or that particular person: However God hath constituted a Law about it, *habenti dabitur*, *Matt.* 25. 27, 29. Laid out the ordinary method of it, and prescribed the means, *Jer.* 13. 27. *Prov.* 2. 4, 5. so as to leave all men without excuse that have it not, to be cast by the Gospel; yet hath he reserved to himself the prerogative of a *Supersedeas*, to dispense the same to whom he pleases; and this is founded in his *Dominion*, without all respect of persons: It was Typ't by Gods Election of *Israel*, without all reason, to be a people to himself, when no better than any other people of the Nations, *Josh.* 24. 2, 3, 4. *Isa.* 51. 2. *Was not Esau Jacobs Brother, saith the Lord, yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his Mountains waste*: As there is the Dominion of Providence, so is there the Dominion of Grace *irrespective*, the regulation whereof belongs to Gods Will of *purpose* only, not of *precept*: When men have forfeited the Grace of God, what now if God will do more for one

than

than for another, as in the Instance of *Saul* and his Companions, *Acts* 9. 3, 14. what wrong to any? May he not do what he will with his own, in a matter of bounty, Matt. 20. 13, 15.? *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called*, *Rom.* 8. 30. ch. 9. 11, 15. *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace*, 2. *Tim.* 1. 9. what tho there be nothing Antecedently lovely in the creature, absolutely considered, for God to have regard to? *Tit.* 3. 5. yet may God make a person lovely; to allude to that *Ezek.* 16. 6, 8. *when thou wast in thy Blood, I said unto thee, live. Behold thy time was the time of love.* Why may he not make a difference where he finds none? This is the most absolute irrespective effect of Divine Love, without all motive or reason taken from the person on whom it is terminated. And altho it be not that meant in the Text, yet doth it not carry any the least contradiction unto it, as some would have it.

2. There is yet another Respect of God unto men, and that is, in the Communication of his Complacential Love,

and

and the effects of it unto them, in their acceptance to favour and life. And this is it of which the Text ſpeaks. And this is without all reſpect of perſons too, in a limited ſenſe; but not as before: for, here God has a ſpecial regard to the qualification of the ſubject, or his Grace in the Soul, and has obliged himſelf thereunto, without diſcrimination. And for that very reaſon is he here ſaid to be no reſpecter of Perſons; for that in every Nation, in whomſoever true Piety is to be found, ſuch perſons ſhall be ſure to find acceptance with him, as the next words do explain it.

The genuine ſenſe of the Apoſtles aſſertion then is this, In whomſoever the Eſſence of true Piety is, and the fruits of it, let him be of what Nation he will, (for that is his own inſtance) be he *Jew*, (a *Jew*, imported a covenant people) or *Greek*, God reſpects not that; let him be Bond or Free, Noble or Ignoble, Poor or Rich; yea, Circumciſed or Uncircumciſed, let his outward Condition or Religious Advantages be what they will be, or Diſadvantages, ſtill without Reſpect of Perſons on any ſuch ſcore, he

ſhall

ſhall be accepted with God. If the old Man be put off, and the new Man be put on; why then, *there is there neither* Greek *nor* Jew, *Circumciſion nor Uncircumciſion*, Barbarian, Scythian, *bond nor free, but Chriſt is all and in all*; the perſon is accepted in him. Col. 3. 10, 11. *If the uncircumciſion*, ſaith the Apoſtle, (and there the ſtick was) *keep the righteouſneſs of the law, ſhall not it be counted for circumciſion*? Rom. 2. 26. *He is a* Jew *that is one inwardly, and circumciſion is that of the heart*, v. 29. ſuch a one was *Cornelius*, a *Jew* inwardly, though a *Gentile* outwardly, and conſequently no Bar could lie in the way of his acceptance with God. But what advantage then hath the *Jew*? The objection the Apoſtle puts *ch.* 3. 1. and anſwereth, *v.* 2. much every way in the point and means he grants it; but not ſo as if no other were capable of Salvation; that he denies, even then when Circumciſion was in force, *Chap.* 2. 25. *Circumciſion availeth nothing, nor uncircumciſion, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy*, Gal. 6. 15, 16. without reſpect at all of perſons, otherwiſe

wiſe than as they are differenced by the new Creature.

Yet farther to clear up this προσωπολήμψια, the Word here uſed in the *Greek*, is a Word of Aſſiſe, as is noted by the Learned, and is Denominated of Judges, who are then Termed Reſpecters of Perſons, when in Judgment they have regard to any thing but the Equity of the Cauſe; when reſpecting the Face, and overlooking the Cauſe, *Equalibus inæqualia tribuuntur*, right is not done, the cauſe is commended for the perſon ſake, and not the perſon for the cauſe. And this is it which *Peter* denies of God. How groſly then are they miſtaken, who would make this to be one Eſſential difference between the firſt and ſecond Covenant, That in the former, acceptance began at the Work, and ſo proceeded to the Perſon; but in or under the later, the Perſon is firſt accepted, and thereupon the Work: that the former ſaith, Do this and Live; the later, Live and do this. Contrary to the whole Currant of Scripture, *Prov.* 4. 3, 4. *Ezek.* 18. 21. *Mat.* 19. 17, 27, 28. 1 *Cor.* 7. 19. 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. *Jam.* 1. 25.

Rev.

Rev. 22. 14. Making the Command of Christ to the Young man, *Mat.* 19. 17. to be exploratory only, to try him; as likewise the Declaration made by God unto *Cain*, *Gen.* 4. 7. *If thou do well, shalt thou not be accepted?* As if he meant not one word as he said to him, *Mat.* 7. 21. *Rom.* 2. 13.

Gods Love of *Complacency*, Favour, and Acceptance, has its rise in his *Legislative* Righteousness and Justice; is regulated by his standing Law, in its Gospel Ἐπιείκεια, equity; and is dispensed *judicially*.

Hence, look as on the one hand, God abhorreth that his Damning of any Person should be resolved into meer *Dominion*. *Is God unrighteous*, saith the Apostle, *when he taketh vengeance?* *Absit!* God forbid: how then shall he Judg the World? *Rom.* 3. 5, 6. No! it's a Just Recompence of Reward, *Heb.* 2. 2. a Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God, *Rom.* 2. 5. So on the other hand, in saving any one, *he will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patience continue in well-doing, seek for Glory, to them eternal life*,

Rom.

Rom. 2. 6, 7. *But glory, and honour, and peace to every man that worketh good; to the* Jew *first, and also to the* Gentile, v. 10. *for there is no respect of persons with God*, v. 11. *It's a Righteous thing with God thus to do*, 2 *Thes.* 1. 7. *For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name*, Heb. 6. 10. *Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judg shall give me at that day, and not to me only*, 2 *Tim.* 4. 8. the free Gift of God indeed it is, *Rom.* 6. 23. but withal, *quoad ordinem conferendi*, it's the reward of Righteousness. And as the *Remunirative* Righteousness of God, (with a contemperation of Mercy too, *Psal.* 62. 10. 2 *Tim.* 1. 16, 18. for still we are sinners) is concerned in the constitution of the Law; so is his *Essential* Justice in the *Execution* thereof (as supream Governour of the World, and final Judg thereof) concerned, that his favour and acceptance be equally dispensed, (in the case in hand) according to his Law, *Psal.* 119. and that without regard to the outward advantages or condition of person,

persons, Religious or Civil. *Knowing*, saith the Apostle, *that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free, whether servant*, Eph. 6. 7, 8. *or master*, v. 9. *neither is there respect of persons with him.* So Col. 3. 23, 24, 25.

Now we are come to the main point considerable in St. *Peter*'s conclusion, contained in v. 35. namely the restriction of the Subject by their Character: shewing who they be that in every Nation are accepted with God. And they are such, and only such as *fear* him, and *work* Righteousness.

Of the predicate much need not to be spoken. It hath been hinted already what we are to understand by acceptance with God *here* in. It's a most comprehensive term. It includes Justification, Reconciliation, Pardon of Sin, and title to Life Everlasting. *Now when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the* Gentiles *granted repentance unto life.* So ends the story, chap. 11. 18. what greater privilege than to be a favourite of Gods? *And God accepted* Job, *there-*

In

In his favour is Life. (To be rejected or disallowed of God, ἀδόκιμος 2 *Cor.* 13. 5, 6. is the direct opposite thereunto). The publication of the Gospel of peace and salvation, is the proclaiming of this *Jubile*, for the manumission of sinners, termed the acceptable year of the Lord, *Luk.* 4. 19. *Abraham* was called *the friend of God*; and that involved within it, his Justification, *Jam.* 2. 23. and this comprised the whole of what St. *Paul* laboured after, that whether present, or absent, clothed with the Body, or out of it, that he might be accepted with God, 2 *Cor.* 5. 9. and *he it is that worketh us for the self-same thing*, *v.* 5. and for all the Glorious Effects of it: *Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*, Col. 2. 12. nothing more is required to make meet, for one, than for the other.

The description of the Subject, who they are, that without all discrimination do and shall partake of this great privilege, is it which I design more fully to dwell upon.

The Character here given of a Perſon accepted with God, is one, the moſt juſt, full comprehenſive, and indiſputable, in the whole Book of God. And every Souls Concernment it is to be ſolicitouſly inquiſitive about it. It's the only true Wiſdom, *Job* 28. 12, 28.

The ſame is Reduced in the Text unto two Heads. (1.) A Fearer of God. (2.) A Worker of Righteouſneſs. Each of which we ſhall ſpeak particularly unto, with regard to *Cornelius* all along, the Samplar which the Apoſtle had in his Eye, for the contribution of light unto our enquiry.

Some Interpreters do expound the former, of ſound Piety, and true Religion toward God. The later, of unſpotted Integrity, Equity, and Juſtice toward Man: in Conformity to the two great Commands, *to love God with all the heart, and our Neighbour as our ſelf; on which two, hang all the law and the prophets*, Mat. 22. 40. Or in the general, I chuſe rather to Interpret the former, of Internal Religion, or Veneration paid to God in the Heart; and the latter, of the exterior overt acts thereof, whether reſpecting

ſpecting God or man, *Pſal.* 15. 2. which in the iſſue comes much to the ſame. However the particular handling of both Branches, will fully let us into the underſtanding of the meaning of the whole.

But before we proceed, there lies a double objection in our way, which muſt be removed.

1. How *Cornelius* (or any one in his Circumſtances) could be ſaid to be a Pious Man, or a true Fearer of God; when as yet he had not imbibed the Doctrine of the Goſpel, nor had any explicit belief of Chriſt; as it is Evident that he had not, nor yet his Houſhold?

2. How he could in the mean while be accepted of God, without Faith in the Mediator, (or his Prayers) conſidering alſo the hint which himſelf received from God, that he ſhould ſend for *Peter, who ſhould tell him words whereby he and all his houſe ſhould be ſaved?* mentioned, *ob.* 11. 14.

I would willingly wave what is controverſal, in ſo practical a Subject; but the Text muſt be cleared. Beſides that

whatsoever is written, is for our instruction; and the slighting, and passing over whatever seems difficult at first, in the opening of the Scriptures, do but betray men to perpetual ignorance in the things of God.

One Answer will serve to both Objections. Without Faith it's impossible to please God, or be accepted with him, *Heb.* 11. 6. or to be a Pious Person. True! but the Faith necessary thereunto hath been diversified according to the several Editions of the Gospel, and Gradual Revelations made by God of his mind unto Man. *Cornelius* had the Faith there described by the Apostle, which was the Faith of the Ancient *Patriarchs*. Namely, *the belief that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seke him.* Nor can any one come unto God without it. He came to God, as Gracious, and Merciful, and Pardoning sin, and as a Rewarder of all that uprightly serve him; on the Principles that the King and People of *Nineveh* went, *Jonah* 3. 5, 9. tho he knew not distinctly on what account, on whose score it was, that God was so propitious.

Never was any man Heard, Saved, or Accepted, but for the ſake of the Satisfaction and Merits of Chriſt. But what on mans part was abſolutely neceſſary to be known unto him, or believed by him, in order to his actual participation of the Benefit of the undertaking of Chriſt, is another queſtion. The ſame hath been oft-times varied. The Rule of Gods Final Judgment ſhall be the remedying Law, or new Covenant with all Men; but ſtill according to the ſeveral notices, or diſcoveries, that in ſeveral Ages, and to ſeveral Perſons, he hath made of the ſame to them. *Rom.* 2. 12, 14, 17. *Luk.* 12. 48.

Nor can there remain any matter of wonder or doubt, touching this Inſtance of *Cornelius* his acceptance with God, unto any one that ſhall but impartially think upon the Faith of the Apoſtles and Diſciples of Chriſt, how ſhort and defective it was in the main Fundamentals of the Chriſtian Belief for a time; whilſt yet they were in a ſtate of Salvation for all that; notwithſtanding the advantages they had moreover to know more, above what *Cornelius* had. They looked for

some visible outward Kingdom to be erected by him in the World, *Acts* 1. 6. to be set up under the Messias, *Luk.* 19. 11. they thought not that he was to die, *Matth.* 16. 22. *ch.* 17. 23. *Mark* 9. 32. nor believed his Resurrection from the Dead, *v.* 10. not after it was attested, *John* 20. 25, 29. *Luk.* 24. 20, 21, 25, 37, 41. muchless did they think of his Ascention to the right hand of the Father. How little did the Virgin *Mary* her self understand of Christ her Son according to the Flesh, *Luk.* 2. 50, 51. yea how little did the Angels, or glorified Spirits, know of Christ his Priestly Office, before his Incarnation? 1 *Pet.* 1. 12. *Eph.* 3. 9, 10. *Rev.* 7. 13. the full understanding of which Mystery, was much more hid from former Ages, *Col.* 1. 26. no instance we have of their putting up Prayers to God in the Name of a Mediator, before the assumption of the Humane Nature by Christ, in which he was a middle person. *Ye believe in God, believe also in me*, John 14. 1. *The way into the holiest of all was not yet fully made manifest*, Heb. 9. 8. *ch.* 10. 20. whence was the *bondage* state, even of the *Jews*. *Hitherto have ye*

asked nothing in my name, Joh. 14. 24.

Whether or no there be any now in the World, out of the Church, that have not heard of Christ, that are strangers to the Covenant in its peculiar advantages now under the last edition of the Gospel, that be true fearers of God, (the Candle of the Lord being so far extinct among them, *Gal.* 2. 22. 1 *Thes.* 2. 16.) may be a doubt; but whether if any such there be, they shall be accepted with God, cannot be doubted: *Cornelius* was such a one; the Faith that he had, purified his Heart, and influenced his Life, and he was accepted of him; tho his Faith was short of what was necessary to his Salvation afterward, when he had more revealed unto him, *ch.* 11. 14.

Two great Truths are in this our Enquiry cleared up by the way, to this day hid unto many good men.

1. That Faith precisely in the Priestly Office of Christ, is not the *only* condition of our Justification in the sight of God. Nor is it truly said, that such Faith *alone* justifieth, and must so do; for thus it's alone apt to receive Christ, and that no

other Grace is capable of ſuch an Aſſignation.

True it is, that we are juſtified by Chriſt *alone*, as the *meritorious* cauſe thereof, *Rom.* 5. 9. But beſides that the Scriptures do indiſpenſibly require now more of us, to the end that we may be juſtified by him, than Faith only; namely, Repentance, *Acts* 3. 19. Regeneration, *Tit.* 3. 5. And an upright Converſation, *Heb.* 5. 9. 1 *Joh.* 1. 7. Yea, denies it to Faith *only*, *Jam* 2. 24. Beſides this I ſay, then muſt the truth aſſerted in the Text be quite overturned; for *Cornelius* was ſo far from being juſtified by ſuch Faith alone, that he was juſtified before he had it, or without it, or he was not juſtified or accepted at all; now, when the Apoſtle affirmed it of him, ſome other Grace was capable of being the condition thereof; or he muſt be utterly uncapable of it.

2. Yet farther; then is Juſtification, or Acceptance with God (for it's all one thing meant) a continued act, ſuſpended ſtill on the future performance of the commands of God, whatever God hath or ſhall reveal to be his Will. *Cornelius*

nelius was actually in a state of Favour with God, so saith the Text; But yet if upon *Peter's* Preaching unto him, he embraced not the Faith of the Gospel with his Houshold, neither he nor they could be saved, *ch.* 11. No, man is but conditionally pardoned and admitted unto Favour with God here; It's suspended still with an *If*, and *Except*; it will not be questioned in the matter of Faith, which was *Cornelius* his case; and *vice versa*, it's as sure, and as plainly affirmed in the Word of God, in the matter of Obedience in all other Instances of it: Let a Mans Faith be what it will, suppose him once justified too, Gods complacential Love and Favour, or Acceptance to Life, is still suspended on his future continuance in obedience unto what he knows to be his Will, or may to him be yet further revealed so to be, tho the Revelation its self be already finished. *If ye keep my Commandments, ye shall abide in my love, John* 15. 10, 14. *If we walk in the Light, as God is in the Light, the Blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin, 1 John* 1. 7. so *Rom.* 2. 7. *ch.* 8. 13.

And in as much as so great weight is laid upon the message sent by *Peter* from God unto *Cornelius*, termed Words by which he and all his House should be saved; that is, if attended unto, believed, and embraced, as we have it 1 *Cor.* 15. 1, 2, in a parallel Instance, *v.* 3, 4. It might be very pertinent in our way, first to open what that message did contain and import; but that it would prove too long a digression from what we have undertaken; yet I can't wholly pass it over neither, because what was last proposed unto him to be believed and received, as ever he would be saved, is first to be attended unto by us, as the leading condition of the Gospel now; yea it began already to be perilous to *Cornelius* and his Houshold to be ignorant of Christ. *That word*, saith *Peter*, *you know*, *which was published throughout all Judea*, *v.* 37. The same with us, all must needs have heard of, and he that believeth it, shall be saved; that is, *cæteris paribus*, other things alike answering, *John* 3. 36. (*And he that believeth not, shall perish*, John 6. 24.) *Who by him do believe in God*, 1 Pet. 1. 21. This Narrative of his unto *Cornelius* and

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the rest, met together with him, begins *v.* 36. and ends *v.* 43.

And the same containeth a summary collection of their *credenda*, or chief Articles of the Christian Belief, contained in our Creed, the like whereof we have again, *ch.* 13. 23. to *v.* 39. Let me but mention the Heads.

1. He declareth unto them the *Unction* of Christ, or his anointing to his sacred Offices, both of Priest, Prophet, and King, *v.* 38. the execution of his Sacerdotal Office he chiefly designeth to open; he is also Lord of all, *v.* 36. by him peace was preached, by him it was obtained, and he was anointed thereunto, *Luk.* 4. 18.

2. How he was Crucified: *Whom they slew, and hanged on a Tree, v.* 39. *Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the Tree*, 1 *Pet.* 2. 24. in our Room, *ch.* 1. 18.

3. That he was *raised* up by God from the dead the Third day, *v.* 40. *Who was delivered for our Offences, and was raised again for our Justification*, *Rom.* 4. 25. *And he shewed himself openly to witnesses,*

witneſſes, choſen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he roſe from the dead, v. 41. Who therefore could not be miſtaken, *Acts* 1. 3.

4. That it is he that is *ordained* of God to be the Judg of quick and dead, *v.* 42. *The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son, John* 5. 22. This, ſaith he, we are commanded to teſtifie; and then he concludeth with the ſuffrage of all the Prophets, *That through his Name, whoſoever believeth in him, ſhall receive Remiſſion of ſins, v.* 43. that is, who *aſſents* unto what he had delivered to them, as a faithful ſaying, and *embraces* it as worthy of all acceptation, 1 *Tim.* 1. 15. Termed a believing in him; or *receiving* of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, *Col.* 2. 6. for faith is in the will alſo, *John* 5. 40.

Theſe were the words, or the ſum of them, which *Peter* delivered in that Aſſembly; God was now manifeſted in the fleſh, 1 *Tim.* 3. 16. And it was the deſign of God the Father, that he ſhould have the Honour of his Redemption of man; and that every Knee ſhould bow to him, *Phil.* 2. 10. Therefore as God ordered

it,

it, that by *Aquila* and *Priſcilla*, *Apollos* ſhould be inſtructed in the way of the Goſpel more perfectly, *Acts* 18. 26. So by his ſpecial Diſpenſation was *Cornelius* directed unto *Peter*, to give him light into the former rudimental Principles of the Doctrine of Chriſt, that he might know the way of Salvation more fully, and his preſent obligation in order to it. *In whom ye alſo truſted, after that ye heard the Word of Truth, the Goſpel of your Salvation*, *Eph.* 1. 13. So they, *While Peter ſpake theſe words, the Holy-Ghoſt fell on them*, v. 44. *and they were baptized in the name of the Lord*, v. 48. Now was the Character of *Cornelius* compleated, and his acceptance with God confirmed to him, *Mark* 16. 16. Nor can any one with us now be termed a true fearer of God, but the Faith of Chriſt muſt be preſuppoſed unto it; to which add the fear of God, and working Righteouſneſs, and it makes up the full Character of a Perſon accepted with him: Which two Branches (having cleared our way), we ſhall now proceed to the more diſtinct opening of them each in particular.

1. To

1. To begin with the former: *But in every Nation he that feareth him*, that is, God; he alone is the Object of all religious fear; and the fear of him here imports the very essence of true Piety: *This do, and live*, saith *Joseph*, *for I fear God. Hast thou considered my servant Job, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and eschweth evil*, ch. 1. 8. It matriculateth or initiateth into the power of Religion: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, and the knowledg of the holy, is understanding*, Prov. 9. 10. A *devout* man, *Cornelius* is termed, *v.* 2. (still we must have an eye to him) Εὐσεβὴς it is a pious godly man; the same Character with that of *Annanias*, who opened *Paul*'s Eyes, *Acts* 22. 12. Devoted to Godliness, as the Word is Translated, 2 *Pet.* 3. 11. The same with Θεοσεβὴς, a Word peculiar to the Scriptures, which becometh Women professing Godliness, 1 *Tim.* 2. 10. And one that feareth God, is but *exegetical* of the former, it imports the same thing. More particularly,

1. The Fear of God imports the whole of his Worship, and is ordinarily put

put for it: *The children* of *Israel* had sinned against the Lord their God, and had feared other Gods, 2 *Kings* 17. 7. That is, had worshipped or serv'd them; and *their fear towards me, is taught by the precept of men*, i. e. their Worship, *Isa.* 29. 13. *So shall your Children make our Children cease from fearing the Lord*, *Josh.* 22. 25. The worship of the true God, and that according to his own Prescription, enters the Character of a fearer of him: *And Jacob sware by the fear of his Father Isaac*, *Gen.* 31. 53. That is, the Eternal God whom his Father worshipped, v. 42. And this act of his was an Instance of his own Fear of the same God: He sware by the Lord only; not by the Gods of *Laban*, or by the Lord, and by *Malchum*, *Zeph.* 1. 5. *Him only shalt thou fear. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, him shalt thou serve, and to him thou shalt cleave, and swear by his name*, Deut. 10. 20. *Him shall ye fear, worship, and do sacrifice to*, 2 *Kings* 17. 36. What is the basis or foundation of this fear or Worship, which God requires in *Adam* from lapsed man, to be paid unto him, the *Psalmist* gives us an

account

account of; *But there is forgiveneſs, that thou mayeſt be feared*, Pſal. 130. 4. It lies in the diſcovery of Forgiveneſs with God, or that he is a rewarder thereof: The entrance of ſin had laid man under the curſe, and ſo unhinged all *Adam and his wife hid themſelves* (to no purpoſe neither) *from the preſence of the Lord God*, Gen. 3. 8. It was the revelation of pardoning Mercy, that retrieved and brought back again the fear of God, or his worſhip into the world: Take away the aſſurance of that; namely, that God is placable, and there is no foundation of hope, or encouraging motive left for ſervice or obedience for the future: If any of the ſons of men were left as remedileſs as the Devils, why then God would not expect this fear from them; the belief of the contrary is the very firſt notion that God requireth our aſſent unto, next to his Being, in all our Addreſſes unto him, *Heb.* 11. 6. *If the Lord were pleaſed to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering at our hands*, Judg. 13. 23. It was a good Argument; the very *preſcription* of worſhip to fallen man, is a moſt ſure Indication, that he will

will deal with him upon new terms of Mercy.

This was the Faith of *Cornelius*, and that which induced him unto the fear of God, whilſt as yet he little underſtood, that without the Blood of God there is no remiſſion, *Heb.* 9. 22. Or that the Offering of Chriſt at *Jeruſalem*, was the only way to it.

And are not they near as wide from the truth of the Goſpel, who admitting the Death of Chriſt to enter the Covenant Grant of Forgiveneſs, would limit his Sacrifice only to the Elect; ſaying, that he obtained not remiſſion for any more, on any terms? What hath been ſaid, carrieth in it a demonſtration to the contrary, and reflects light into the extent of the Death of Chriſt. It's moſt certain, that God hath preſcribed his fear unto every ſinner; and as certain it is, that he expects no love, fear, or new Obedience from them, who antecedently thereunto, can have no particular aſſurance, that there is any forgiveneſs or acceptance with God for them; much leſs would he exact of them to believe it, if it were not ſo, or thereupon to bottom

tom their ſervice, or to return unto him on that ſuppoſition. Either then Chriſt, *by the grace of God did taſte death for every man*, Heb. 2. 9. *pro ſingulis generum*: or there is not forgiveneſs with God for them, (which yet was the Faith of *Cornelius*, (as ſhort as it was) that he might be feared: or we muſt ſay, that there is forgiveneſs with him for ſome men, without reſpect to Chriſt; or a Conditional Covenant grant thereof unto them, never Ratified by, or Founded in his Blood; which is not the Chriſtian Belief. This then is the firſt ſenſe to be underſtood of the fear of God; it's to pay Worſhip and Homage unto him; nor can the fear of God be without it.

2. It imports further, an awe and reverence of his Divine Majeſty, reaching the mind and affections. *Sanctify the Lord of Hoſts himſelf, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread*, Iſa. 8. 13. *Fear ye not me, ſaith the Lord? will ye not tremble at my preſence?* Jer. 5. 22. *God is greatly to be feared in the aſſembly of his Saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him*, Pſal. 89. 7. *let all*

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the earth fear the Lord, and let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. *Psal.* 33. 8. *stand in awe, and sin not*: meaneth not a bare dread of his wrath, a meer passion, or fright, or anguish of conscience, respecting the guilt or danger of some atrocious sin, or wickedness: This may serve to restrain, or to impel to some partial acknowledgment of God; but serves not to any heart-change. *They feared the Lord, and served their own Gods,* 2 King 17. 33. *unto this day they fear not the Lord*, v. 34. that is, aright. No! they were none of those that tremble at the commandment of God, as it's said, *Ezra* 10. 3.

It imports a tenderness of Heart. *Because thy Heart was tender,* 2 Chr. 34. 27. *How shall I do this thing, and sin against God?* saith *Joseph*. It's an habit of mind and Soul, disposing to an awesul regard unto God, aversation unto sin, and jealousy of offending him. The affections are the Wings and Feet of the Soul, and have need to be ballanced with the awe of God, in order to its flight from sin. *They shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days,* Hos. 3. 5. In a Pious

Soul,

Soul, this fear hath in it a Contemperation of Love. It's no *Bondage*-fear, 2 *Tim.* 1. 7. It's Conjugal, without amazement. So far as Love is perfected, it casts out tormenting fear, 1 *Joh.* 4. 18. it brings into the liberty of the Gospel, *Rom.* 8. 15. *And* Moses *said unto the people, fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not*, Exod. 20. 20. *Fear not; yet fear and love him*, Deut. 10. 12. Neither yet doth this filial fear of God, Exclude the fear of everlasting Destruction from him, in case, or on the supposition of a Covenant breach, or presumptuous sinning against him. *Fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell*, saith our Saviour to his Disciples, *Mat.* 10. 28. *Let us serve him with reverence and Godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire*, Heb. 12. 29. *Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy*, 1 Cor. 3. 16, 17. *the flesh lusteth against the spirit*, Gal. 5. 17. *now the works of the flesh are manifest*; of which he gives a Catalogue, *v.* 19. of the

which,

which, saith he, *I tell you before, as I have told you also in time past, that they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God, v.* 21, *nor of Christ*, Eph. 5. 5. To be sure, what ever God threats, it behoveth every Pious Man to fear. *Be not high minded, but fear*, Rom. 11. 20. let him that standeth do so, 1 *Cor.* 10. 12.

(*Obj.*) But it's here Objected by many, That all this is the voice of the Law of Works; that such threats belong not to believers; only that of Fatherly chastisement, in case they sin. *If his children forsake my law*, &c. *I will visit their transgression with the rod; my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him.* Psal. 89. 30 how then can the fear of Destruction in such case belong to a Believer, or enter the Character of a true Fearer of God?

(*Ans.*) The Objection lies deep, and involveth in it, a mistake in the whole Tenour of the Covenant of Life, as it is the Instrument of Gods Government over Mankind, one and other. It proceeds upon these following false suppositions; Namely, 1. That

1. That Faith alone enters the condition of the New Covenant; the Covenant which God hath Enjoyned unto us, as the Apostle Phraseth it, *Heb.* 9. 20. contrary to *Gen.* 17. 1, 2. *Psal.* 103. 17, 18. *Exod.* 24. 7, 8, &c.

2. That all such Texts as those forenamed, belong to the Original Law of Works, or of Innocency, such as 1 *Cor.* 6. 9. *Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor Idolaters,* &c. *shall inherit the kingdom of God.* And if so, then no man dying impenitently in those sins can be barred Eternal Life; for the Penalty of the first Covenant is not conclusive, but of those whom the New Covenant doth not Relieve. And it alike commandeth spotless Innocency also, and threats all sin alike with damnation, as well as such. Or,

3. That if such Texts, with the threat contained in them, do belong to the Gospel; yet as soon as any one believeth, he is priviledged with a special exemption there-from. Tho he violate the precept, the threat can take no place, not for any time to hold him under the same.

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The Sum of the Hypotheſis, or Suppoſal, which is by thoſe who make the objection, defended; or muſt be, is, *viz.* That the Goſpel Commands (or Counſels rather) obedience to the whole Law of God, and Obedience thereunto is neceſſary by Precept unto every Soul, under the pain of ſin: But that it hath but one ſingle Precept, (which is that of Faith) belonging to it, *qua fœdus*, as a Covenant, or in Conjunction with the promiſe; nor yet but one that belongs to it, *qua lex*, as a Law, *i. e.* in Conjunction with its Sanction or Threat. And then let a Mans Faith work, or not work, to his eſcaping of all or any the ſins or pollutions enumerated, ſtill it will ſave him. What ſhould bar his acceptance with God, when the whole condition of the Covenant is performed, and kept? What need of the fear mentioned, if all this be true? Or how can it conſiſt?

That it's more than poſſible for a believer to relapſe into the ſins mentioned, which are threatned with death by the Goſpel, or Law of Chriſt, is not, nor can be denied. Moſt dreadful inſtances we have upon Record atteſting the ſame.

Neither

Neither let any one that girdeth on his harneſs, yet boaſt himſelf as he that putteth it off? What ſhall we now ſay in ſuch caſe? was there not cauſe to fear deſtruction? To give but one inſtance. *David* upon an affront given him by *Nabal*, contrives to murder him, with all his Family, 1 *Sam.* 25. 22. was he now Pardoned, I ask, all that while that he was upon his March, with his four Hundred Men, to put the ſame in Execution? Repent him for that time, he could not (nor can that be true without reformation, which is of its Eſſence) either now he had forfeited his acceptance with God, and lay bound under the guilt of his ſin unpardoned, or our Saviours Doctrine to his own Diſciples could not be words of truth, but a meer ſcarecrow, *Mat.* 6. 15. *But if ye forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your Father forgive your treſpaſſes.* So again expreſly, *ch.* 18. 35. the forgiving of others is made the indiſpenſable condition of our obtaining pardon from God; yea, and a recognition thereof enjoyned us, in our prayers to God for it, *and forgive us, as we forgive them*, v. 12. and this *David* himſelf

ſelf very well knew and feared it in caſes of that Nature, *Pſal.* 32. 1, 5. *Rom.* 4. 6, 8. And if that be not pardon in the moſt proper and ſtrict Senſe, it's not ſpoken of in all the Scriptures; ſo 1 *Joh.* 1. 9.

To that Text alledged, *Pſal.* 89. I anſwer, It's of the final event, whereof it ſpeaks; it belongs to Gods Will of Purpoſe, or his Decree, which ſpeaks not the Tenour of Gods Covenant with us. It's ſpoken of Chriſt, *v.* 19. and of his Seed, *v.* 29. and belongs to the Doctrine of Gods Decrees, (wherein the perſeverance of the Elect is founded) not to his legal Conſtitution with man. There it runs, v. 30. *if his Children forſake my Law, and walk not in my Judgments; if they break my Statutes, and keep not my Commandments.* Here directly contrary, *If thy Children will keep my Covenant, and my Teſtimony*, Pſal. 132. 12. So it ran with *David*, and ſo it does with us, *Pſal.* 103. 17, 18. *Rom.* 8. 11, 13. The meaning of the former is no more, but that he will ſecure a ſeed unto Chriſt, *Iſa.* 53. 10. who they are, belongs to his ſecret purpoſe only to know, whilſt they

are out of his way. But whoever they be, if they belong to him, such Prophesies, or Promises do evermore include in them, Gods Will or Purpose to recover them from their sin, or sore relapses, (and that sometimes by their sufferings too) in pursuance of his decree, *Phil.* 1. 6. to the end that they may not perish by his Law, 1 *Cor.* 11. 32, 34. in the mean while, they are to fear, *Heb.* 4. 3. and to take heed, *Heb.* 12. 15, 17. 2 *Pet.* 1, 5. 9. yea the best of Gods People. *For destruction from God was a terror to me,* Job 31. 23. that is, to awe him from sin, *v.* 24. 26, 28. so it was with *David, Psal.* 119. 120. so with St. *Paul,* 1 *Cor.* 9. 27. neither is it inconsistent with Faith. Nay it is the genuine product of it. *By faith* Noah *being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith,* Heb. 11. 7. Nor yet is it inconsistent with a filial free obedience, to be governed by a Law, and to be influenced by the fear of it, whilst there is a love to the duty prescribed by it,

1 *Pet.* 1. 17. nor yet with true Gospel Consolation, and security, whilst man keeps within the Bounds of Gods Covenant, not to violate the same, 1 *John* 3. 21. and to others it belongs not. No man holds his Estate by a Title so Indefeazible, but that by the Guilt of any Capital Crime, it may be forfeited; yet an honest Man may remain comfortably secure for all that, in his possession. *The law is not made for a righteous man*, saith the Apostle, 1 *Tim.* 1. 9. he saith not for a *Believer* only, but for a *Godly man* in his walk; *against such there is no law*, Gal. 5. 23. that is, it cannot hurt him; continuing such, it hath nothing against him. Yet will not God, for the sake of any mans peace, reverse his law (the Law of Christ now I am speaking of, 1 *Cor.* 9. 21.) nor yet invalidate it, by severing the Precept from the Sanction or threat of it, so to render his Government meerly Precarious. Nor can any Believer make it good, that the Law of Christ, abiding his Relation thereunto, is altered, that it hath nothing to say to him if he break it. So much for the second instance of the fear due unto God,

which yet remains unshaken, as belonging to the Character of a true fearer of him; namely the Awe and Reverence of his Majesty, and dread of Offending him.

3. Yet further, the Fear of God here, Importeth an Habitual Inclination of Heart and Soul unto a regard to God, with a due respect to all his Commands. Hence the fear of God is oft put for his Service or Obedience. *If then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear*, saith the Lord of Hosts? *Mal.* 1. 6 *ye offer the blind for sacrifice, the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person*, saith the Lord? *v.* 8, 14. It's termed a fearing of the Commandment, *Prov.* 13. 13. *That they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways*, 2 Chr. 6. 31. It's all Grace and true Piety in the *Root*, Spring, and Principle of it. *I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*, Jer. 32. 40. to walk in the fear of God, and in his Command, is one and the same thing. Only that it connoteth the inward respect that the Soul hath unto God in the keeping of his Commandments, (it's eye to him)

and

and deference of all to his Glory; which is it that *specifieth* every instance of obedience, and renders it truly Religious. *Then had the Churches rest, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost*, Acts 9. 31. the words of *David* speaks out the sense of those: *I have set the Lord always before me*, Psal. 16. 8. this works holiness into the very frame of the Soul. Oh that we might never forget it! *but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ*, saith the Apostle, 2 *Cor.* 2. 17. as in the sight of God. This is indeed to walk with God, which was the Encomium of *Enoch* and of *Noah*; they walked with God in their Generation. No man dare to call God to Record for a Witness, when he is about to commit any notorious sin. Let him but dismiss the thoughts of God, and shake off his fear, and then he hath let himself loose to all manner of Abominations. And *Abraham* said, *because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place, and they will slay me*, Gen. 20. 11 he could have no security whilst the fear of God was not before their eyes, nor God concerned in their actions. On-

 trariwise,

trariwiſe, as the Fear of God whereof I am now ſpeaking, doth ſeminally and virtually contain in it all obedience to his will: ſo doth it run through every line of it, and preſerve the Soul in it. A Prince that feareth God, ruleth Juſtly, and that becauſe he feareth God. *For the former governors had been chargeable to the people; yea and their ſervants bear rule over them; but ſo did not I, becauſe of the fear of God*, Neh. 5. 15. ſuch a one is a Conſcientious, a Dutiful Subject, *Rom.* 13. 5. *ſubject for conſcience ſake.* Such a one is a Juſt and Righteous Judg in his place. *Wherefore now let the fear of the Lord be upon you; with him there is no reſpect of perſons, nor receiving of reward*, 2 Chr. 19. 7. It maketh good and faithful Wives, *Col.* 3. 18. *as it is fit in the Lord. Husbands, v.* 19. *Children, v.* 20. *Fathers, v.* 21. *Servants, v.* 22. *Obeying in ſingleneſs of heart, fearing God. Maſters, ch.* 4. 1. *knowing that ye alſo have a Maſter in Heaven.* It influenceth the moſt ſecret Actions, and runs through all. Obadiah *feared the Lord greatly*, 1 Kings 18. and he bid the Prophets of the Lord, *v.* 4. *I thy ſervant fear the Lord from my youth,*

v. 12. There was a good beginning and example unto such as are young, *Eccl.* 12. 1. *The Midwives feared God, and did not as the King of* Egypt *commanded them, but saved the Men-children alive*, Exod. 1. 17. *and therefore God made them houses*, v. 21. *Such a one feareth an Oath*, Eccl. 9. 2. or to do any injustice, 1 *Thes.* 4. 6. It's *the fountain of life*, Prov. 14. 27. It sets all awork; and whilst it keeps the Dominion, it keepeth the Soul steddy to God, throughout the whole course of its life. It's not so much one single Grace, as it is the habit of all. Further instance of its effectual Operation, in whosoever it is, the next Branch of the Text, will furnish us with, which is the other Character of a Person accepted with God; of a Person, I say, *accepted with him*; not only of a working saving Faith, as some would have it, which is to read the Scripture backward; but immediately of a Person accepted to Life. For it hath the Promise thereof connected with it, as well as Faith its self, as the Text witnesseth. Nor indeed can any evidence of a mans Justification, or Accep-

tance, be fetcht from that which hath no Promiſe of it.

2. *But in every nation, he that worketh Righteouſneſs is accepted with God*: That is the other Character to be opened; what it is to be a worker of Righteouſneſs.

Righteouſneſs is the Commenſuration or anſwering of what a man doth, to the Rule or Standard of it, which is the Law of God; even as ſin, to which it is oppoſed, is defined by its Tranſgreſſion of the Law, as containing its whole formal nature: Look then, as he that doth any thing which in the matter or circumſtance thereof, the Law of God forbiddeth, (and ſo for omiſſions), he doth ἁμαρτίαν ποιεῖν make, or work ſin, 1 *Joh.* 3. 9. The illegality of the action is its obliquity; and that can never be ſeparated from the entity of the action, or the being of the ſame, ſo long as the Law doth abide that prohibiteth it: ſo he that doth what is conformable to the ſame Law of God, he doth or worketh Righteouſneſs: *He that doth righteouſneſs, is righteous, even as God is righteous*, 1 Joh. 3. 7.

For

For the more diſtinct underſtanding of what we are upon, it is neceſſary in the firſt place, that we enquire into the Rule or Standard of this Righteouſneſs, whereof the Text ſpeaks.

The *Moſaick* Law, *ſtrictly* ſuch, as it was peculiar to the *Jews*, to be ſure is not it. The *Gentile* Nations then knew it not; nor was *Cornelius* proſelited to it: Among the *Jews*, whilſt ſome of the Higheſt pretenders to it, and to an abſolute conformity to it, *Phil.* 3. 6. miſinterpreted it to a ſubverſion of the ancient Faith of the Goſpel, and neglect of Chriſt, they fell ſhort of ſo much as a ſincere obedience unto it, in its ſpiritual interpretation, *Except your righteouſneſs ſhall exceed the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven*, Matt. 5. 20. *When the Gentiles attained unto it*, *Rom* 9. 30.

Wherefore let it be conſidered, that there hath been a twofold Law, or Rule of Righteouſneſs enacted by God, and given to mankind; the one to him whilſt *innocent*, the other to *fallen* man; the one termed the law of Works, of perfect ſinleſs obedience; the other the

law of Faith, *Rom.* 3. 27. Tho neither did the former exclude all *Faith*; nor yet the later all *Works*.

To the former there is none righteous now, no not one, *Rom.* 3. 10. Some are more atrocious ſinners than others; but none that doth good, and ſinneth not, *Eccl.* 7. 20. 1 *John* 1. 10. No work done, meaſured by that Law or Rule, can be, or be termed to be a work of Righteouſneſs; this Law is ſtill in force, with its Threat, *Gal.* 3. 22. But no man by or according to it, can be accepted with God: This the Apoſtle concludes, *Rom.* 3. 20. The ſame did *David* before him, *Enter not into judgment with thy ſervant, for in thy ſight ſhall no man living be juſtified*, Pſal. 143. 2. *i. e.* by that Rule.

To the latter, *viz.* to the remedying Law, which is the ſtanding Law of Chriſt his *mediatory* Kingdom, conſtituted for the relief of lapſed man, there are, and may be righteous perſons, *i. e.* ſuch as are not wicked, as *David* interprets it, *Pſal.* 18. 21. & 19. 12, 13. but upright with God; and ſuch were *Zecharias* and *Elizabeth*; *Both righteous before God, walking*

walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs, Luke 1. 6. According to this Standard, through the Grace of God there are works, and workers of Righteouſneſs to be found in the world, tho but few comparatively, God knows. *Cornelius* to the beſt of his light was ſuch a one; and accordingly he found acceptance with God.

The univerſality, or unreſervedneſs of it, is the main teſt of its ſincerity, which the Scriptures lay ſo much ſtreſs upon, *That ye may be ſincere, and without offence, till the day of Chriſt*, Phil. 1. 10. *For our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of our conſciences, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our converſation in the world*, 2 Cor. 1. 12. I ſay, its trial lies in the *univerſality* of obedience, which is indiſpenſably neceſſary even unto life, that we be not put to ſhame, or confounded: *Then ſhall I not be aſhamed, when I have reſpect unto all thy commandments*, Pſal. 119. 9. *Cornelius* was δίκαιος, a juſt or a righteous man, *v.* 22. he was intirely ſuch, ποιῶν, *if ye fulfil the royal law, ye do well*, Jam. 2. 8. That is,

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the Gospel Rule, the Law of Liberty, the Rule of Gods Judgment, *v.* 12. if not, your Faith neither can't save you, *v.* 14. Such are the τέλειοι, the perfect men, of whom the Scriptures speak, *Jam.* 1. 4. *Col.* 1. 28. Such were *Noah* and *Job*, whilst they stood perfect and compleat in the Will of God, *Col.* 4. 12. Upright according to the interpretation of the Gospel, 2 *Cor.* 8. 12. Reaching still forward in the degree of it, *Phil.* 3. 14.

Now that we may not rest altogether in Generals, and that yet we may give some bounds to our discourse upon this Head, it remaineth only but to exemplifie this working of Righteousness by a collection of what the particular Instances thereof were in *Cornelius*, whence the Apostle took his measures that he was such a one, and from whence he draws his Inference in the words of the Text, *Now I perceive*, &c.

And they are reduced to these Four Heads, in the Story of him. (1.) His Invocation of God, (2.) The Order of his Family, and his care of their Spiritual Estate. (3.) His Compassion or Charity.

Charity. (4.) His maintaining of a good report for Piety and Religion. Of all which briefly in their order (not to ſpeak of bare negatives) here.

1. For his Invocation of the Divine Being whom he feared, he *prayed to God alway*, v. 2. 4. So do all that fear God, and are accepted with him. *Whoſoever ſhall call upon the name of the Lord, ſhall be ſaved*, Rom. 10. 13. In what way he prayed, we have no account, whether by a Form or without; Prayer its ſelf is a part or *medium* of Divine Worſhip; whether after this or the other way, is but a mode or manner of Worſhip, not limited by the Law of Nature or Inſtitution: Out of doubt, praying by or with the help of a form, is lawful, yea and ſometimes may be a duty, rather than to neglect Prayer, where abilities are wanting, *Luk.* 11. 1. But for *Cornelius*, his appears rather to be *ex pectore* out of his own Heart; he prayed with the Spirit, and with underſtanding, as it is 1 *Cor.* 14. 15. no doubt; but who of all the Nations ſhould compoſe his prayers for him, I think no man can. Divine Prayer is a part of natural Worſhip

and

and Religion; neither was there ever any Nation ſo Barbarous, who acknowledged any God at all, that doubted of their Obligation to invocate his Name; whatever their ignorance have been of the true God; ſo were the *Ninivites* convinced, *Jonah* 3. 9. ſo the Mariners in the Storm, *Chap.* 1. 5. *And they cried every man to his God.* And, which therefore was a wickedneſs in *Darius* and his Nobles, to Eſtabliſh a Law but for thirty days to reſtrain it, *Dan.* 6. 7. which therefore alſo *Daniel* contemned, *v.* 10. It's a duty moſt expreſly commanded of God, *Phil.* 4. 6. and a principal part of our acknowledgment of him, *Pſal.* 79. 6.

Cornelius prayed with his Family, out of queſtion. God will be worſhipped in Societies, this the Light of Nature doth Dictate; and Families were the firſt Churches, and Original of all Societies. Shall men aſſociate for other ends, and not for the Worſhip of God? *Then began men to call upon the Name of the Lord*, Gen. 4. 26. *i. e.* in Societies: the fear of God is not in thoſe Families where it is otherwiſe; but it was in his.

But

But it seems to be private Closet prayer that is here noted of *Cornelius*, the same which our Saviour recommends, *Mat.* 6. 5. where more frequency and liberty may be used, wherein he himself was so frequent, *Matt.* 14. 23. *Mark* 1. 35. and so were all the most Eminent Saints in the Scriptures, *Gen.* 32. 24. *Psalm* 55. 17. and 119. *I have prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried*, v. 147, 148. *Daniel* 9. 20. 2 *Tim.* 1. 3. so here in the Context, *Peter went up to pray*, v. 9. The praying Person is the thriving Christian, and enjoys most of God.

Two Circumstances of *Cornelius* his Prayer, we have here noted. (1.) The Solemnity. (2.) The Assiduity or Continuance.

1. The Solemnity. It was joyned with fasting, he was fasting until this hour; *and at the ninth hour*; that was, about three of the Clock in the Afternoon, *the Angel of God appeared unto him*, v. 30. Fasting on extraordinary occasion, is a Gospel Duty, *Matt.* 9. 15. 1 *Cor.* 7. 5. and it speaks the importunity of his Prayers. *The* energetical *fervent prayer of*

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a righteous man availeth much, Jam. 5. 16. *fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord*, Rom. 12. 11.

2. The Aſſiduity of it. *He prayed always*, v. 2. ſometime in a more than ordinary manner, as before; but he never left off the Duty. *Praying always, with all prayer and ſupplication in the ſpirit, and watching thereunto with all perſeverance*, Epheſ. 6. 18. that is, be alway ready for it, never neglecting it, in its due Seaſon. *Men ought always to pray, and not to faint*, Luke 18. 1. When men go on meerly in a formal way, keeping their rounds in the Duties of Religion as the door turneth on its hinges, without any Life or Progreſs; they are apt to knock off, or grow weary. *Ye ſaid alſo, behold what a wearineſs it is?* Mal. 1. 13. *What is the Almighty, that we ſhould ſerve him, and what profit ſhould we have, if we pray unto him?* Job 21. 15. This is to ſpeak it out, they could gain nothing by driving the Trade, and no wonder if they ſlight it, or totally give it over.

But *Cornelius* feared God, and his Soul followed hard after him, and kept his way,

way; and what profit he found therein we have this account of it, v. 4. And he said unto him, *Thy prayers are come up into remembrance before God* i.e. as the Sacrifice and Incense offered. *Let my Prayers be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands, as the evening sacrifice*, Psal. 141. 2. God will not forget them; *and a Book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his Name*, Mal. 3. 16. *And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day when I make up my Jewels*, v. 17. which is in answer to what the wicked had said, v. 14. *It is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his Ordinance?* This was the Character of *Cornelius* unto *Peter*; the same with that of *Saul*, recommending him to *Ananias*; *behold he prayeth*, Acts 9. 11. and how signally did God shew his Acceptance of them both!

2. The order of his Family, and his care of their Soul-concernments, was another instance of his working righteousness. *He feared God with all his household*, v. 2. such he endeavoured to get

get into his Family, or to make them ſuch. *He called two of his ſervants, and a ſoldier that feared God, one of them that waited on him*, v. 7. What a ſtrait had he been now put to, had he had none about him that ſavoured the things of God, to declare his mind to, or to ſend on ſuch a meſſage? he would likely have been expoſed to ſcorn. *He that walketh in a perfect way, he ſhall ſerve me*, ſaith *David*; *he that worketh deceit, ſhall not dwell within my houſe*, &c. Pſal. 101. 6, 7. *Lord, who ſhall abide in thy Tabernacle*, Pſal. 15. *He in whoſe Eyes a vile Perſon is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord*, v. 4. *Cornelius* lookt not only to have his Family obſequious to himſelf, but he would not endure the contempt of God in it; he taught them the fear of the Lord. How had he invited and gotten together his Kindred and Friends alſo, to hear the word from *Peter*; words, whereby he would have them ſaved as well as his own Houſhold, *v.* 24, 33. the neglect of Family Care and Inſtruction, or incapacity for it, is the bane of the Church, and holy Commonwealth. *For I know*

Abraham,

Abraham, ſaith God, *that he will command his Children and his Houſhould after him, and they ſhall keep the way of the Lord*, Gen. 18. 19. Yea, how often hath a pious Family Inſtruction and Nurture, been bleſſed of God, being accompanied with a good Exemplary walk, unto the ingenerating the fear of God, or the Seed thereof, in the tender Branches of the ſame; and the neglect thereof, is Cruelty to them. *I was my Fathers Son*, ſaith *Solomon*, *tender and only beloved in the ſight of my Mother. He taught me alſo, and ſaid unto me; let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandment, and live*, Prov. 4. 3, 4. thoſe were the commandments of God, that have the Promiſe of Life; *Eph.* 5. 2. ſo did *David* Catechiſe him. *Timothy* was taught the Principles of Religion *from a Child, and knew the Holy Scriptures* by the Education of his Parents, 2 *Tim.* 3. 14, 15. whoſe pedigree the Apoſtle derives from worthy Anceſtors, tho by the Mothers ſide. *When I call to remembrance the unfeigned Faith that is in thee, which dwelt firſt in thy Grandmother Lois, and thy Mother Eunice,*

nice, ch. 1. 5. *And I am perſwaded in thee alſo. Train up a child in the way he ſhould go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*, Prov. 22. 6. Ordinarily (tho not always) a Bleſſing may be expected; the Duty is unqueſtionable; and ſo for Servants alſo, the ſame care is to be had, tho of Children more eſpecially, *Eph.* 6. 4. How elſe can a pious Family, ſuch as *Cornelius's*, be expected?

3. His Alms are noted, as another inſtance of his Piety, or a fruit of righteouſneſs. *Who gave much Alms to the People*, v. 2. The word in the *Greek* ſignifies, Mercy or Compaſſion, which is more intimate to the Soul, and is tranſlated to the exterior Act, or relief given to the Indigent. Without the later, there can be no pretence to the former. *If a Brother or Siſter*, that is, one of the Chriſtian Religion, (for ſo it's to be underſtood, as the term of a Believer oft is, and Saint, 1 *Cor.* 6. 1. *ch.* 7. 14. 1 *Pet.* 2. 17. *Gal.* 6. 10.) *be naked, and deſtitute of daily food, and one of you ſay unto him, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithſtanding you give them not thoſe things which are needful to the Body,*

Body; what doth it profit? Jam. 2. 15. ſo neither is this any thing, without the inward Affection, and Eye to God alſo in it; it belongs not to Religion. Remarkable is that of the Apoſtle *Paul*, 1 Cor. 13. *Tho I beſtow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and give my Body to be burned, and have no Charity, it profiteth me nothing*, v. 3. It's a ſeeming Paradox; what, give all to the Poor, and have no Charity? Yes, it may ſo be, *Mat.* 6. 1. This Duty of Bowels of Mercy, and ſeaſonable help to ſuch as are the proper Objects of it, the Goſpel enjoyneth, and highly recommendeth it. *Luke* 11. 41. It is their right, *Luke* 16. 12. It's of the weighty things of the Law: Mercy is one, *Mat.* 23. 23. *Continuing inſtant in prayer*, Rom. 12. 12. to which is ſubjoined, *Diſtributing to the neceſſity of Saints, given to Hoſpitality*, v. 13. theſe went together in *Cornelius*. And this later is ſo much the more a Duty, as it may be of uſe to make way for the weightier exerciſe of Compaſſion and Charity toward the Souls of them we have to do with, as it is diſpoſitive to Inſtruction; all kindneſs

neſs is ſo. Hence, it is in a ſpecial manner required in thoſe of the Miniſtry, *Tit.* 1. 8. It's an eſſential part of Religion; *Pure Religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to viſit the Fatherleſs and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep himſelf unſpoted from the World*: this is more than tything of Mint and Aniſe. *Thine Alms are come up for a memorial before God*, v. 4, 31. *For with ſuch Sacrifices the Lord is well pleaſed*, Heb. 13. 16. *As it is written, he hath given to the Poor, his Righteouſneſs remaineth for ever*, 2 *Cor.* 7. 9. It's a high Expreſſion, but not the leaſt Derogatory to the Grace of God; it means no more, *than that God will not forget to reward it*, Heb. 6. 10. *For* I *was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirſty, and ye gave me Drink: Naked, and ye clothed me*, Mat. 25 35. *For*, is a rational particle, aſſigned for the reaſon, tho not the proper efficient or meritorious cauſe of acceptance. *That they be rich in good works, ready to diſtribute, willing to communicate, laying up in ſtore for themſelves a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may*

lay

lay hold of eternal Life, 1 Tim. 6. 18, 19. not ſo as Chriſt is the Foundation, 1 *Cor.* 3. 11. but in Chriſt it hath the Promiſe to it, and Gods word is to be truſted to; it's atteſted by his Apoſtles, and all the Prophets, *Eph.* 2. 20. See *Matt.* 7. 24.

4. He maintained a good report for Piety and Religion, which is the laſt Fruit of Righteouſneſs inſtanced in: *And of good report among all the Nations of the* Jews, v. 22. They would ſcarce think that he could be ſaved; but for all that, they thought that if any one, a *Gentile*, could, he might; he was true to his light, and walked moſt convincingly; they could ſay no other of him; the ſame was the Character of *Ananias*, *Acts* 22. 12. And a weighty one it is, that wherein the Teſt of a pious Man doth much lie, that is one Qualification of a Perſon called to the Miniſtry, That he muſt have a good Report of them which are without, 1 *Tim.* 3. 7. His uſefulneſs otherwiſe in the Church of God, muſt needs be impaired; and ſo will any man elſe in his place. Yea, and tho to be a man-pleaſer, to get every

ones

ones good word, may be an evil, and is, *Gal.* 1. 10. And moreover, no mans name, be he never ſo exact, is in his own keeping; *through evil report, and good report*, ſaith the Apoſtle, 2 *Cor.* 6. 8. and our Lord himſelf found it ſo: Yet I ſay, a good man ought to look after it, and to value a good report for Piety and Godlineſs. *Demetrius* hath a good report of all men, and of the Truth its ſelf, 3 *John* 12. ſo ought we to endeavour it, 1 *Pet.* 3. 16. The tryal of Sincerity lieth not only in a regard to things obviouſly commanded, or forbidden; but in a regard to the Glory of God, in matters not ſo particularly or expreſly provided for in the letter of the Law, as being but of ill report, or carrying but an appearance of evil, which comes within the Conſtruction of the Law. *Abſtain from all appearance of evil*, 1 Theſ. 5. 22. A bare appearance of Good, is of no worth in the ſight of God; but to avoid the appearance of Evil, is: *Finally, brethren, whatſoever things are True, Honeſt, Juſt, Pure, Lovely, whatſoever things are of good Report; if there be any Vertue, and if there*

be

be any praise, think on these things, Phil. 4. 8. It's an ill sign for a man to take the stretch of his Liberty, and strain the Law it may be too. A pious Soul that fears God, will have a care, and conscience exercised, to keep him back from any thing that may border upon evil, 1 Cor. 9. 15. or that any ways (tho without just cause) might likely give occasion to others to reflect a dishonour unto God, or cause the name of Religion to suffer. He is tender of Gods Name, and the Reputation of pure Religion, which he Professes, tho with an Abridgment of his own Liberty otherwise, or receding from his right. Such a one was *Cornelius*, or he had not kept up his good report among a people so self-confident and scornful of all other people of the *Gentiles*, as common and prophane. Thus have we finished the second character of a person accepted with God, and the indication or mark of a true fearer of him; which may suffice for the doctrinal part. It remaineth only to bring the same more home, in its Application, or Use.

The Use we shall handle, (1.) by way of Information or Instruction. (2.) Of Reproof or Conviction. (3.) Of Consolation and Establishment. (4.) Of Exhortation and Direction, pursuant to the Doctrine insisted upon.

1. By way of Information or Instruction. Is it so, that of a truth God is no respecter of persons, or of what Nation they be, in the point of acceptance with him, otherwise than as they be found fearers of him, &c? Then, how vain will the pretentions of multitudes, even with us, one day be found, who hope to put in their claim unto the Favour and Mercy of God, on no better foundation or plea, than that they are a Christian people, or of a Nation or Body of that belief and profession? Could not Uncircumcision stem the current of the Grace of God, to anticipate his acceptance of true piety in whomsoever it might be found? Neither would Circumcision avail any thing unto his favour, where the same piety and fear of him was wanting. This the Text concludes, and is directly within its scope. In every Nation, such as fear not God, neither

work Righteousness, shall not be accepted with him. And what was true of the *Jews*, is as true with us: and what their pretensions were, are obvious; and thine, no question, may equal them, and more, if thou beest a Christian. Let us weigh the parallel, and give thee thy advantage, and try what it will amount unto in the case, without the fear of God.

They were a *Covenant*-people; the whole bulk of them, good and bad. God was their God, otherwise than of any other people; and they his people by virtue thereof, *Isa.* 1. 2, 3. *Jer.* 31. 32. *Deut.* 32. 19. Not putative, or *secundum apparentiam* only, in visibility, or appearance only. The notion of a *visible* Church, or people of God, as now sensed, was not then known in the World. *Coram Deo*, In the sight and judgment of God, they stood so related unto him in reality, who yet were no true fearers of him, many of them, yea the greater part. Well then, the Kingdom of God is now taken from them, *Matt.* 21. 43. and amongst others its given to this Nation, an Isle of the *Gentiles*, *Isa.* 42. 4. and thou hast thy share in it.

Behold therefore the ſeverity and goodneſs of God: on them ſeverity which fell; but towards thee goodneſs, if thou continue in his goodneſs: otherwiſe thou alſo ſhalt be cut off, *Rom.* 11. 22. Thou art grafted into, and partakeſt of the root and fatneſs of the *Olive-tree*, the Covenant of *Abraham*, in the room of the branches broken off, who alſo were once really in, but ſtumbled at Chriſt, and fell, *v.* 17. *O the depth of the riches, both of the wiſdom and knowledg of God!* v. 33. With what a paſſion did *Paul* reſent the wicked *Jews* loſs of their antecedent relation to God! *Rom.* 9. 3. the which, through the forbearance of God, thou yet retaineſt: But all this availed not unto life or acceptance; nor will thee. Yet further, They were *Jews* by *nature*, in the force of God's Covenant, and not ſinners of the *Gentiles*, Gal. 2. 15. *i. e. Natural* branches, *Rom.* 11. 21. born ſuch, and their ſeed Gods, (tho of wicked Parents, *Ezek.* 16. 8, 21.) And thou art a Chriſtian born, *Rom.* 11. 16, 17. and thy Children holy, not common, 1 *Cor.* 7. 14. I will not deny thee any advantage

that

that God will account with thee for. But God is no respecter of persons meerly on that score, to accept thee. *Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil, of the* Christian first, and also of the *Jew*, *Mahometan*, and *Pagan* Infidel World, *Rom.* 2. 9. *For there is no respect of persons with God*, v. 11.

Again, They were nigh to God, and had more hope and helps for Eternal Life, than others that were strangers to the covenant of advantages peculiar to them, had, *Rom.* 3. 1. they had the custody of Gods Oracles, which was more than to be within the sound of them, *v.* 2. And this is now thy priviledge with others: and all the World comparatively are in a hopeless condition besides, if not absolutely lost. But God respects thee not for this; thou maist perish by thy own neglect for all that, without escape, *Heb.* 2. 3. as well as they.

Again, They were Circumcised, and took upon them to be debtors to the whole Law: And thou art Baptized, and become a debtor to the whole Gospel, and hast the badge of Gods Covenant upon thee as they had, *Acts* 7. 8. But,

as *Circumcision* profited not, unless they kept the Law; but was made uncircumcision, *Rom.* 2. 25. so, neither can Baptism now save *without* the answer of a good Conscience towards God, 1 *Pet.* 3. 21. it shall no more be accounted to thee, than if thou wert unbaptized.

They had the Law and the Service of God, *Rom.* 9. *The Temple of the Lord are these*, *Jer.* 4 7. so do the Ordinances and Service of the Gospel belong to, and oblige thee; thou art of the Church, and all the institutions of the Gospel belong to it. If thou beest secluded, it's for thy own prophaness or contempt; and thou art not thereby neither broken off the *Olive-tree*, I grant, 2 *Thes.* 3. 15. but however, this is not to be trusted to: God respects no mans person for that. The *Israelites* partook of Sacraments with Gods Warrant, *with whom*, many of them, *God was not well pleased*, 1 Cor. 10. 4, 5. Thou maist have eaten and drunk in Christ's presence, and yet he not own thee, *Luk.* 13. 26.

To come yet nearer; In the point of Belief: Thou believest that there is one God; so did they, when they worship-

ped the golden Calf which they had made, *Exod.* 32. 5. and so do *the Devils also believe and tremble*, Jam. 2. 19.

Again, The *Jews* did believe the Scriptures of the *Old Testament* to be the word of God, a divine Record in the whole; some understanding less, some more of it, they admitted it for the Standard of Doctrines, *Acts* 18. 28. *ch.* 26. 27. *We are* Moses *Disciples*, say they. *We know that God spake unto him*, Joh. 9. 29. in him they trusted: *For in them ye think ye have eternal Life*, Chap. 5. 39. so thou believest of both Testaments; thou ownest the Revelation of the Gospel; but what is this to acceptance with God? *Who have received the Law by the disposition of Angels, and have not kept it*, Acts 7. 53. Out of thy own mouth, upon the Gospel will God take issue in his final Judgment against thee, *Rom.* 2. 16. 1 *Tim.* 1. 9, 11. The Bible which thou carriest to the Church with thee, if thou fearest not God, even it shall condemn thee, as now it judgeth thee. Yet farther,

They also *call themselves the holy City, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel*,

Isai. 48. 2. *They leaned upon the Lord, and said, Is not the Lord among us?* Mic. 3. 11. this was their National claim, but what was all that, whilst *they built up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity*, v. 10. In the general also, they looked for the *Messias*; *Unto which promise our twelve Tribes instantly serving God day and night, hope to come*, Acts 26. 7. Tho their apprehensions of him were indeed very confused; and now being come, to the most of them he was a Stone of stumbling, *Acts* 4. 11. In like manner thou leanest on God, and thou callest thy self a Christian, (some scarce knowing at all what Christ was; others more distinctly understanding and believing the Truth of him) thou art a Disciple of his, *Acts* 9. 26. *Cha.* 11. 26. a Believer; not almost, but altogether a Christian in Belief and Religion; tho not such a one as *Paul* was, *Acts* 26. 28. But a Believer thou art; not *pretextus*, or nominally only; but really in its kind; the stile may truely belong to thee, as heretofore it did to all that were of the Christian belief, and is frequently denominated of them, 1 *Cor.* 6.

1. *Chap.* 14. 22. 1 *Tim.* 6. 2. *Who believed not to the saving of their Souls*, Heb. 10. 39. nor were influenced any more by it, than others by their belief of the Deity, *Rom.* 1. 21. of which no queſtion could be made, nor doubt, were not men deficient to themſelves.

Suppoſe then this to be thy plea, for reſpect unto thy perſon with God; that thou art no *Jew*, nor *Gentile*, but of the Church of God, 1 *Cor.* 10. 32. built on *Peters* Confeſſion, that *Jeſus is the Chriſt, the ſon of the living God*, Matt. 16. 18. This thou believeſt, that there is no other name under Heaven given, whereby thou muſt be ſaved; but ſo did the Devils believe of him moſt expreſly, *Mark* 5. 7. *Luke* 4. 41. ſo the Damſel cried concerning *Paul* and *Silas*, *Theſe men are the ſervants of the moſt high God, which ſhew unto us the way of ſalvation*, Acts 16. 17. (whilſt the Anticipation of Education, Laws and Cuſtoms, prevailed with a great part of mankind to disbelieve and reject the ſame, and do to this day, 1 *Cor.* 1. 23. *Act.* 25. 19. (which is not thy caſe.) Thy Faith is ſound and Orthodox ſo far forth. More-

over, possibly thou art so far true to thy Conviction herein, that thou renouncest thy own Righteousness which is of the Law, and all other Pleas, and betakest thy self (in thy way) wholly to Christ for Salvation. So do all with us generally recognize in the preamble of their last Will and Testament; and do mean, no question, as they say. Flesh and Blood hath nothing in a bred Christian against it, that is, no Heretick; whilst Christ is looked unto as a Saviour only. Thou thinkest it may be, that the fear of God, and working Righteousness, enter not the terms of acceptance with him, nor is supposed to a regular belief on, or particular trust to, or hope in Christ for thy Salvation: Or that thou art a fearer of God, when there is no such thing, and hereupon thou believest in his Name, as they did, *John* 2. 23, 24. and the Rulers, Chap. 12. Who *believed on him*, v. 42. *but did not confess him*; loving the praise of men, more than of God, and there split themselves; rendring that their Faith a meer Presumption, being deficient in that which was to come between their assent, and

such

such reliance, *Rom.* 10. 10. so did *Simon* the Magician, *Act.* 8. 13, 23. so *Luke* 8. 13. *John* 8. 30, 31. or it may be thou renounceſt the Plea of the *Phariſee*, as Heretical, *Luk.* 18. 11. neither indeed canſt thou ſay, that thou art no Extortioner, Unjuſt, Adulterer, &c. (which yet may be true, that thou art not, and thou not a righteous Perſon for all that, *v.* 9.) but wallowing in ſuch Sins, thou art yet reſolved to betake thee to the Plea of the *Publican*: *God be merciful to me a ſinner*, v. 13. and hopeſt to have the priviledg on this plea of thy Sin, and Mercy too. If thou beeſt otherwiſe convinced, thou mayeſt be nearer to acceptance, or the way unto it, than he that thinks himſelf whole, and is not, *Mat.* 9. 12. But tho Chriſt be added to thy Plea of Mercy, or the belief of him, and thou makeſt thy boaſt of him, and intendeſt to abide by thy plea to the laſt: *Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy Name*, &c. Mat. 7. 22. Thou ſhalt have the Priviledg of thy Nation, and outward Relation to him, granted thee, but thou mayeſt read thy Doom for all that, if no doer

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of his Will, *v.* 26. *Depart from me ye that work iniquity*, v. 23. Thou buildest not aright on the foundation; and tho thou, like *Joab*, art fled unto the horns of the Altar, there shalt thou perish. *The Lord of that Servant* (there is thy Badge and Title) *shall come in a day when he looked not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder*, Mat. 24. 50. *and will appoint him his portion with the* Infidels, Luke 12. 46. If Christ be not in thee, the hope of Glory, *Col.* 1. 27. *God is no respector of Persons; but the Children of his Kingdom, even they shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth*, Mat. 8. 12. No one of any Nation or Religion, that feareth not God, or that worketh not Righteousness, shall be accepted with him. What the Apostle said of the Law and Circumcision, *Rom* 2. 25, 27. or of the *Jew*, *v.* 28, 29. *Mutatis mutandis*, is as true of the Christian, of Baptism and the Gospel, now in its last Edition, to which my Text agreeth; and which is also the Argument of the Apostle *James*, *Chap.* 2. from *v.* 14.

to

to the end of the Chapter, respecting Faith alone, without the works of Righteousness, whereof we have been treating, when he saith, *That it profiteth nothing*.

By way of Reproof, Tryal and Conviction. Is this the discriminating Character between the Christian outward and inward, (as before of the Jew) and the only sure Test of any Persons acceptance with God, to be a fearer of him, and a worker of Righteousness. What a multitude then are there, who upon this issue do stand convict and judged by the Gospel, for Persons disallowed and rejected of God, who can put in no claim to acceptance with him; whilst yet, almost all men amongst us, do verily hope to be saved at last: Gods favour they will not despair of.

To be mistaken in this great point, is very common and easie, as it is also dangerous. What else meaneth those so frequent Cautions in Scripture given unto men, to take heed that they deceive not themselves in the case? *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? be not deceived*, 1 Cor. 6. 9. Who they

they are, he subjoyns, v. 6. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked.* Gal. 6. 7. *Let no man deceive you with vain words,* Eph. 5. 6. The unrighteous and such as fear not God, can have no part nor portion in his favour or acceptance. Let us then in his fear, search this matter to the bottom; God can't be false nor True, if it should be otherwise, all our Religion must be a Cheat, and the Scriptures a Fable, if this Doctrine be not true. But if it be true, as it is,

(2.) What will become of the multitude of those who very seldom, if ever, do all the Day or Week long, so much as think on God or his Name, such can have no pretence to the walking in his fear. How can that man set God always before him, or be influenced by the fear of him, who has committed the thoughts of him to Oblivion? *God is not in all his thoughts,* Psalm 10. 4. a sad and black Character. *So are the paths of all that forget God, and the hypocrites hope shall perish,* Job 8. 13. *Shall not God search this out?* Psal. 44. 20, 21. What room for so much as a thought of God! It's not difficult to find whence it is, for

what,

what, that lies at the bottom. *Can a Maid forget her Ornaments, or a Bride her Attire? Yet my People* (the Jews) *have forgotten me days without number.* Jer. 2. 32. Why can't the Maid forget her Ornaments if she would? Scarce; or the Bride her Attire? Why, those things have gotten the Heart and Affections, are esteemed of as a Treasure, and so carries the Heart after, *Matt.* 6. 21. and the Thoughts, which are as the Pulses of the Heart, work accordingly: but they had no esteem or love for God in their heart, and so forgot him. How many is this the case of with us? That mind their business, it may be, but mind not God at all: As to such, God is as if he were not; fear him they cannot, or concern him in what they do, who think not of him, and desperate is their Condition, *Psal.* 9. 17. far from acceptance with God.

(2.) Set aside such as would industriously extinguish out of their mind and conscience the light and sense of the Being of God. These may be afraid of him, but can have no pretence to the fear of God, of which we have been

treating.

treating. *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledg, God gave them over to a reprobate mind*, Rom. 1. 28. Know God they did, but they liked it not; whether they liked it or not, it broke in upon them the Conviction thereof; but fain they would ſhake it off, ſo as not to retain it: They *liked not, at leaſt, to retain it. Therefore they ſay unto God, depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledg of thy ways*, Job 21. 14. they would get looſe from him. *What is the Almighty that we ſhould ſerve him?* v. 15. Theſe are far from being true fearers of him, or accepted of him.

(3.) Set aſide all thoſe, who if they retain the Senſe of the Deity, yet frame in their mind a falſe Notion and Conception of his Being, make him an Idol, or what he is not. *They ſlay the widow, and murder the fatherleſs: yet they ſay, the Lord ſhall not ſee, neither ſhall the God of* Jacob *regard it*, Pſal. 94. 6, 7. *Thou thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch a one as thy ſelf*, Pſal. 50. 21. that is, that God minded not what they did, or kept no Record of their Actions: *But I*

will

will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver, v. 22. Whoso taketh God for all Mercy, and no Justice, or make a blind or a false God of him, that will not make good his Word, how can such possibly truely fear him? or consequently be accepted with him?

(4.) Set aside all the workers of Iniquity, who harden themselves openly against God, such can't pretend to the fear of him. Remarkable is that of *David*, Psalm 36. 1. *The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his Eyes.* It spake out the thing to the quick sense of *David* heart, that it must be impossible for such to have the fear of God before their Eyes. What! for men not to fear an Oath, to commit Whoredom, Drunkenness, Injustice, and all Filthiness; and yet to fear God in the mean while! It's a Contradiction. *Who drinketh iniquity like water.* Job 15. 16. *He stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengthens*

neth himself against the Almighty, v. 25. *He runneth upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his Bucklers*, v. 26. that is, he boldly, and without all fear, hardneth himself against God, and rusheth upon him, and the Violation of his Law, when he comes forth against him, armed as it were for his Destruction. Such there are in the World, and whosoever they be, whose wickedness do shew them to be of that number, we may without any breach of Charity conclude them not to be fearers of God. Shall the man, *who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things, are worthy of Death*, Rom. 1. 29, 31. go for one that has any fear of God, whilst he not only does the same, but hath pleasure in them that do them? v. 32. And dost we see or hear of such, who will acknowledg Drunkenness to be threatned with Death, and yet will not only do the same, but rejoyce to drink down a Person, or take pleasure in it, and so in other Sins; which is to bid a defiance to the Almighty? Will God accept such a Person? No; he may *bless himself in his heart*, *saying*,

saying, I shall have peace, tho I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst, Deut. 29. 19. (and the case is the same as to other Sins) *But the Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord, and his jealousie shall smoak against that man,* v. 20. It's a certain Indication of a reprobate state.

(5.) Yet farther, What shall we think of those, who are Scorners and Contemners of those who fear God, to whom a vile Person is not so contemptible, as one that makes conscience of his ways. Surely such are far from the fear of God themselves; yet this hath been, and still is the case of many. *Wherein they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you,* 1 Pet. 4. 4. *Who shall give account to him that is ready to judg the quick and the dead,* v. 5. they wonder that any should be so tender, whilst their own Consciences are *cauterized or seared as with a hot Iron,* that they don't bleed any longer, 1 *Tim.* 4. 2. yea, and have them in derision, *Job* 12. 4. A Person that truely fears God, will like the Principle in whomsoever

soever he may hope it to be; however possibly he may take another to be misguided or mistaken, in the conduct of his Conscience toward God, he would not have him cast off the fear of God for all that, or be too bold with his Conscience, whilst it speaks in Gods Name, 1 *Cor.* 8. 10. *Chap.* 10. 20, 28, 29. It's a reproach with us, not to be called a fearer of God; but I wish that with many it were not a greater reproach to be one truely fearing him. To ridicule Purity, Preciseness, Conscience, or the Fear of God, under the Pretext, that it's the Person only that is struck at, who pretends to it, and and has it not; is a practice introductory to Atheism and Irreligion; and for the most part is but a pretence neither; it's the Life, Power and Practice of true Religion that is indeed exposed, whilst men are ashamed openly to relinquish the empty Name of it themselves; and where it is so, it's a certain Conviction of such a Person, not to have any sense of God, or of his fear, on his Soul, nor consequently any Interest in, or claim to his Favour, 2 *Tim.* 3. 5.

(6.) All

(6.) All the former being set aside, as openly judged of God, so as to have no pretence left for their coming within the Character of the Text. Let us now more intimately reflect back upon the Explication of the meaning and import of the fear of God and working Righteousness, by a Recapitulation of the heads before insisted on, for the opening of their essential Nature, and see then how many more will be found short of acceptance with God, who may have some kind of pretence unto it, as taking themselves qualified for it. *Cornelius* was a godly Man, that was his Character, exemplified in the Text. But now there is Μόρφωσις εὐσεβείας, the meer form, Cask, Garb, or shew of Godliness, 2 *Tim.* 3. 5. as well as the Life and Power of it; or, which may be without it, thou pretendest to the fear of God, as ever thou lookest for acceptance with him; but canst thou make good thy plea? Thou hast it in thy Creed, but hast thou it in thy Heart?

Particularly for Instance, Art thou a Worshipper of the true God, and that in Spirit and in Truth? What revenue of

of Glory, what homage doſt thou pay to him? Or on what foundation doſt thou go? Without Faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God, *Heb.* 11. 6. Is it a reaſonable Service that thou payeſt unto the Divine Being? Haſt thou ever conſidered that the entrance of Sin into the World, had laid Mankind under the Curſe of God, ſo as that no Worſhip or Service of his could find acceptance with him? How comeſt thou then by the perſwaſion, that God will not accept an Offering at thy hands? Or, haſt thou conſidered theſe things? Or, how ſtandeth thy heart affected with the good Pleaſure of God, in the Revelation of forgiveneſs with him, that thou mighteſt not want encouragement, tho a Sinner, yet to cleave to him, to Worſhip or Fear him? Without Knowledg, neither thy Heart, nor thy Worſhip can be good. Put thy ſelf on the Tryal all along as we go; the teſt of any ones Fear of God, and of his Acceptance with him, is one and the ſame; and if God has no Worſhip from thee, he is not thy fear. But to haſten.

Again, how standeth thy heart affected toward God, as to thy awe of him, and reverence of his Majesty? *He will not hold him guiltless that so much as taketh his name in vain*, Exod. xx. 7. What shall we think of those then, who have commonly in their mouths, O Lord! O God! so, O Jesus! without any the least thought or sense of his glorious Majesty; yea, who by prophane Cursing and Swearing do customarily expose and tare the holy Name of God? Can such have any dread of God on their Soul? Any tenderness for him? Let Conscience speak, or suppose thou art sometimes afraid of his Wrath; yet consider what a Temptation of Love hast thou at the bottom? Dost thou fear him, and hate him, *Rom.* i. 30. and fly from him; this is not to fear God with acceptance; even according to thy fear; *so will be his wrath against thee*, Psal. xc. 11. if that be all.

Yet nearer; how stands the habitual frame of thy heart and Soul, with respect to the fear of God; hath it pointed it towards himself and holiness, or not? Doest thou set the Lord always

before

before thee, as the Record and Witness of all thy Thoughts and Actions; his Will as the Rule and Measure of them; his Glory as the Scope and End of them? Do'st thou walk in the fear of the Lord all the Day long? Is it wrought into thy Soul? Doth it influence thee in the whole course and tenor of thy Life? Do it run through all? if not, lay aside thy pretence to it, for to acceptance with God. The fear of God is another thing than what many take it to be; it imports the whole frame of the new Creature, entire Piety and Godliness, and infers it; where it is, all a man doth will favour of it; it's always at hand to govern his Actions, and to keep him ready in his walk with God. Oh, how many do their walk witness to have no part nor lot therein! what fruits of it do appear?

Finally, look back no further than to those few Instances before enumerated of the works of Righteousness, which do evermore accompany the fear of God, or that it doth exert it self in, (as it doth in all other instances, if it be true) and what a multitude have we

cast

caſt in that valley of Deciſion, on that teſt alſo.

How many are there, who ſcarce pray unto God at all, unleſs in ſome time of extremity, *howling on their beds of languiſhing*, Hoſ. 7. 14. *There is none that calleth upon thy name, that ſtirreth up himſelf to take hold of thee*, Iſa. 64. 7. How many that do it only for form-ſake, but ſeldom neither, or that give unto God but the refuſe of their time and ſtrength, and are indeed weary of it? How many more, with whom it hath no place in their Families; God dwells not there, nor is his Name recorded among them, and yet they will hope for acceptance; but God ſpeaks the contrary. *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not on thy name*, Jer. 10. 25.

Again, how many, who will riſe early, and ſit up late, to lay up for their Families and Poſterities, but take no regard what become of their Souls, or to their Nurture in the fear of the Lord; without which yet they can't deliver their own Souls? We read of an in-

queſt of Blood againſt the Watchman, *Ezek.* 3. It concerns the Miniſtry, but not them alone; God has committed alſo a truſt to the heads of Families, which they muſt be accountable for likewiſe. *If thou ſpeakeſt not to warn the wicked from his wicked way to ſave his life, the ſame wicked man ſhall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand,* v. 18. Ch. 33. 8. nor is it to be limited to the guilt of their temporal ruin only. *Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men,* ſaith the Apoſtle, *Acts* 20. 26. In the ſame caſe, the Soul of another may be loſt through thy default, and thou mayeſt repent it when it's too late. But to be careleſs of a mans Family, not to regard of whom it's made up, or care for their ſpiritual Eſtate, convinceth ſuch Perſons to be unrighteous, and void of Gods fear. Righteouſneſs conſiſts not in bare Negatives: conſult thy own ſtate upon this teſt alſo, whoever thou art that pretendeſt to acceptance with God.

So for Compaſſion, and Miniſtring to the neceſſities of thoſe who are in want. *But whoſo hath this worlds good,*

and

and seeth his Brother have need, and shuteth up his bowels of compassion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him? 1 Joh. 3. 17. Yea, or the fear of God, who requireth the contrary: Yet, how many are far from this! *I will be a swift witness against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts,* Mal. 3. 5. here is quite the contrary, and we see how God resents it. How many are there that fail in this great Duty? And how many more that do it not in singleness of heart, as unto God? And so he accepts it not.

The like and much more may be said as to mens concernment for the repute of pure religion, or the keeping of a good report for it. How many regard not that, otherwise than as their own affectation of the credit thereof may oblige them to it, if at all? How many, who seem to be unwilling that any others should preserve their good Name, for Religion and Piety toward God, but will endeavour to raize it, and are glad to find occasion, or make one against the strictest Professors of it? *Report say they, and we will*

report it, Jer. 20. 10. But how few that ſeem really tender for the Name of God concerned even on themſelves, not to take the liberty to do ought that is, or that may carry the appearance of evil; whereby, not their Name, but the Name of God may have diſhonour reflected upon it? Beſides thoſe (that affect not to be over religious, are aſhamed of it, and covet not any good report for it at all) who will not pretend to it, nor conſequently are capable of ſcandalizing Religion ſo much as for the want of it. All things which are ſimply Lawful, may not be expedient to be done, 1 *Cor.* 10. 23, 24. And whoſo is tinctured with the fear of God, will have ſome diſcerning and exerciſe of Conſcience therein, and will purſue things lovely, and of good report, as well as things honeſt, and in their nature juſt; but God knows how few ſuch there be in the World; the fear of God is no ſuch common thing as ſome take it to be.

Let now but the whole be put together, and conſidered; and wouldeſt thou, whoever thou art, but as impartially look within, and meaſure thy preſent

State

State and Condition by the ſame Standard as God will certainly lay Judgment to the Line, and Righteouſneſs to the Plummet, and ſweep away the Refuge of lies, as the Prophet ſpeaks, in caſe thou do'ſt not, thou mighteſt come to ſome Concluſion about it, and touching thy everlaſting eſtate, how thy caſe ſtands in the point of acceptance with God.

But know, whether thou wilt ſee, or not ſee it, if being weighed in the former ballance, thou beeſt found wanting in the fear of God, and working Righteouſneſs, thou art caſt by the ſanction of the Goſpel of Chriſt, and thereby ſentenced to be in a reprobate ſtate, *Eccl.* 8. 12, 13. 1 *Cor.* 6. 9. Expoſtulate the caſe therefore now with thy ſelf, and not as they of old did with God, Mal. 1. 6. *But ye ſay, wherein have we deſpiſed thy Name? Wherein have we polluted thee?* v. 7. The Lord regardeth not the Offering any more; *Yet ye ſay, wherefore?* Ch. 2. 14. *ye have wearied the Lord with your words; yet ye ſay, wherein have we wearied him? When ye ſay, Every one that doth evil, is good in the ſight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them; or where is the God of*

judgment? v. 17. Look to it, before it be too late, and God answers you with a witness, *Chap.* 3. 5, 16, 18. and don't set down in the bare Notion, or hearing of these things, or be like the man that beholds his natural Face in a Glass, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was; *Paralogizing*, or with fallacious reasonings, putting a cheat on your own Souls, as we have it, *Jam.* 1. 22. *Whilst the word is not ingrafted there*, v. 21. or nothing comes of it; the stock is not changed, nor yet the fruit; take heed that Conviction be not blasted, and come to no issue.

3. By way of Consolation and Establishment. Is it of a Truth, *That in every Nation, he that feareth God, and worketh Righteousness, is accepted with him?* Is the voice of the Gospel of God and our Saviour? Then whoever upon the trial can witness within themselves, that they are of that number, they may with good warrant assume the comfort thereof, and conclude themselves justified in the sight of God, and in favour with him. Art thou one concerned about the evidence of thy everlasting Estate,

ſtate; and it may be, dubious about it? Why, here thou haſt the juſt Character of a ſaved Perſon, if it may pleaſe God to help thee to diſcern how it is with thee. Thou art one that believeſt the Scriptures, and aſſenteſt to the Record of God concerning his Son, 1 *John* 5. 11. and haſt betaken thy ſelf to it, not only as a Revelation worthy of Credit, but alſo worthy of all Acceptation, 1 *Tim.* 1. 15. *Thou truſteth in Chriſt*, Eph. 1. 13. and in God the Father through him; this thou doeſt, ſo far at leaſt, as to conclude Chriſt Jeſus a Saviour all-ſufficient for thee, and to look to him, and to no other Name for Salvation, ſave unto his alone, without which thou art not of the Chriſtian Religion, and it's to no purpoſe to enquire any further for thee; (with us, he that is no Chriſtian, can be no pious man to be ſure) elſe a bar is already put in againſt thee, *Job.* 3. 36. But moreover, *haſt thou counted the coſt?* Luke 14. 28. And conſidered the terms of thy Salvation by Chriſt, and the Tenor of the Grant thereof; that not Faith only, *but Godlineſs alſo, hath the promiſe of the life which is to come*, 1 Tim. 4.

8. (as Death is threatned to the contrary, *Heb.* 12. 14.) haſt thou accounted this alſo *a faithful ſaying*, as the ſame Apoſtle affirms it to be, *v.* 9, (which is more hardly believed, for that the fleſh is unwilling to have it true) or accounted it *worthy* of all *Acceptation*, as the Apoſtle ſubjoyns? How ungrateful ſoever to corrupt Nature, and where the pinch with us lieth, this comes home to the buſineſs; yet further, art thou one that truly feareth God? Is his fear in thy heart? Doeſt thou walk in it? A Sinner thou art; thou dareſt not abide by a ſtrict Tryal, according to the Original Law of Innocency; thou art ſenſible of thy need of pardoning Mercy; but art thou a righteous Perſon (not Wicked) *i. e.* upright to the Standard of the new Law or Goſpel? Doth the fear of God influence thee, unto a univerſal and undeſerved Reſignation of thy ſelf up unto his Will and Commands? Hath it changed the habitual Frame and Diſpoſition of thy Soul? Is it become the governing Principle of thy Life? Doth thy Conſcience witneſs it ſo to be, in the ordinary courſe and tract of thy Converſation? Preſerving

ving thee from those Wickednesses which would intrench upon Sincerity; and keeping thee steady (in some prevalent measure) in thy walk, more immediately with God, and in all the Duties of thy Place and Calling, in the Station wherein he hath set thee, as becometh the Profession of Godliness, accordingly as hath been before opened, and I hope shall not need here again to be repeated? If I say, this be thy case; whatever thy circumstances otherwaies be, or may have been; how heinous soever thy former Guilt; how dark or doubtful soever thy present Condition may remain to thee; Of a truth, I am assured that thou art accepted with God; thou hast the condition unto which the Promise is made, and hast Gods warrant to assume therefrom, and to conclude thy happy estate; and God is faithful, and can't deny himself, his Truth, his Word, and he would have thee to take the comfort of it; his Attributes (as hath been shewed) he hath laid at Stake for thy security; it's a righteous thing with God, that it should so be.

Are men said to believe unto the saving of their Souls? so are they said *to repent unto Salvation*, 2 Cor. 7. 10. and unto life, in the case of *Cornelius* and his household, *Acts* 11. 18. and *by patient continuance in well-doing, to seek for it*, Rom. 2. 7. and true Piety hath the promise of it. If now *the messenger, the interpreter, one among a thousand, shall shew unto thee thy uprightness*, as *Elihu* speaks, *Job* 33. 23. tho thou tookest thy self for lost, *v.* 22. *Yet will God be gracious to thee, for he hath found a ransom*, *v.* 24. Lift up thy hands which hang down, and thy feeble knees! *He will be favourable to thee, and thou shalt see his face with joy; for he will render unto thee thy righteousness*, *v.* 26. Thou shalt behold his face in it, *Ps.* 17. 15. and thou mayest trust to it in its place, *Ezek.* 33. 13. How full is the Scripture for thy encouragment? *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant*, Psal. 25. 14. *Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him*, Ps. 33. 18. *Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him*, Ps. 103. 13. *His mercy is from everlasting to everlasting*,

ſting, upon them that fear him, v. 17. *To ſuch as keep his Covenant, and to thoſe that remember his commandments to do them,* v. 18. *when they walk in darkneſs and have no light, let them truſt in the name of the Lord,* Iſ. 50. 10. *The ſun of righteouſneſs ſhall ariſe unto them, with healing in his wings,* Mal. 4. 2. When *the day of the Lord ſhall burn as an Oven againſt all the proud, and all that do wickedly ſhall be as ſtubble,* v. 1. *Bleſſed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments,* Pſ. 112. 1. *The righteous ſhall be in everlaſting remembrance,* v. 6. *He ſhall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, truſting in the Lord,* v. 7. *Say to the righteous, it ſhall be well with him,* Iſa. 5. 10. *The work of righteouſneſs ſhall be peace, and the effect of righteouſneſs, quietneſs and aſſurance for ever,* Ch. 32. 17. And what more can be ſaid? *O how great is thy goodneſs, which thou haſt laid up for them that fear thee,* Pſal. 31. 19. No man is warranted to truſt to the Grace of God in Chriſt, that abides an unrighteous Perſon; but he that truſteth to his own righteouſneſs; (if indeed he be righteous) namely, that God will

accept

accept him thereupon; it's an instance of his trust to the Grace of God, to the Blood of Christ, and to the Promise of the Gospel in their place also; for the one is no way inconsistent with the other, but inclusive of it; and God is to be trusted of his word. Hence the Godly have appealed, and may do unto God for his favour on that plea, *Neh.* 1. 11. *Psal.* 18. 20. *Isa.* 38. 3. (as they were sure, that if they had it not, they ought not to expect it, *Mat.* 5. 12.) *Psal.* 26. 1. Tho it's not the Portion of all the faithful, to be able so to discern the Work of God on their Souls, as that they can always be capable of pleading it; especially, not of those whose Progress is so small, that it's hard to discover any change scarce in them: Yet is it pleadable, where it is discernable, and the God of Mercy will admit it; the word is gone out of his Mouth. Well then, *If thy heart condemn thee not*, upon a due scrutiny and search into this matter, then mayest *thou have confidence towards God*, thou hast his word for it, 1 *Joh.* 3. 21. If thou feareſt him, and workeſt righteousness, thou art and shall be accepted with

with him. *The Blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth*, or absolveth *thee from all Sin*, 1 *Joh.* 1. 7. and so will the Judg at last pronounce of thee, *Matt.* 25. 35. 46.

4. It remaineth only to improve the Truth asserted, by way of Exhortation, Counsel and Direction, and so to draw to a Conclusion. Is it so, that they and they only *that fear God, and work righteousness, are accepted with God?* The Exhortation then is, to a thorough and speedy coming up to the same Duty, and it concerns two sorts.

(1.) Such as upon a Reflection on the frame and temper of their heart, and course of their life, may from what hath been said, find reason to conclude, or suspect that as yet they are short of the fear of God, and true Piety, or the Character of a Person in favour with God. This is no condition for thy Soul to rest one moment in, if that be thy case; yea, if thou but suspect; it's to sleep as on the top of a Mast, on the very brink of Ruin for ever. Let me therefore inculcate upon thee, the necessity and reasonableness of thy compliance with the

call

call of God unto thee in the Text. *As I live, ſaith the Lord God, I have no pleaſure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live,* Ezek. 33. 11. Why will ye dye? What *Moſes* ſaid unto *Iſrael*, the ſame ſay I unto thee; *What now doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to ſerve him with all thy heart, and with all thy Soul?* Deut. 10. 12. *To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his ſtatutes which he hath commanded thee for thy good,* v. 13. What haſt thou to except againſt theſe terms? Are they not equal? Is not the thing it ſelf required of thee, for thy good, if nothing more did depend on it? Was not the fear of God, and the Impreſs of his Holineſs upon the Soul of man, the Primitive perfection of his Nature? How comes it to paſs then, that now, the retrieving, or bringing of it again into thy Soul, ſhould not be accounted for its good? Yea, God be hardly thought of, as if he meant ill to mankind, or would abridg him of what is for his good, in laying this reſtraint upon him? This

Suggeſtion

Suggeſtion does but ſhew, how deeply an Averſation unto God and Holineſs, has rivetted its ſelf into the nature of lapſed man, with a potent Inclination to all Sin, as if a man could not live one good day without it. In the mean while, if this be thy arguing, or theſe thy inward thoughts; what Notion haſt thou of the future ſtate, or condition of thoſe who are accepted with God? No man can be happy againſt his will or liking. Happineſs conſiſts in the pleaſure that ariſes from the harmonious agreement between the Object and the Appetite; and the ſight of Gods face, and the aſſimilation of the Soul unto him in the perfection of Holineſs, are the conſtituent parts of it, *Pſal.* 17. 15. 1 *Joh.* 3. 2. If then thou abhorreſt from this, and diſguſts it, Heaven it ſelf can be no State of happineſs for thee, if indeed without a change firſt made in the temper of thy heart and ſoul, it were poſſible for thee to have thy lot there; Abſolutely thou canſt not deſire it, but *Hypothetically* only, or for a reſerve on the ſuppoſal that thou muſt dye, and can enjoy the pleaſure of Sin and the World no longer, as of two Evils to chuſe

chuse the least, Heaven rather than Hell at last; a sad *Omen!*

But what is it that thou wouldest have or desire, (to be the terms of thy acceptance with God, I can't call it, but) that with a *non obstante*, thou mightest find favour with God, or be saved from Wrath to come? What, that he would recede from his establishment, and not insist on his Fear, or such strict Piety, or works of Righteousness in order thereunto? That is as much as to say, thou wouldest have Elbow-room for the Flesh, and Indulgence to affront the Divine Majesty, and contemn his Laws, to cast off all fear and regard of God, to pay him no Homage or Service all thy days, and yet to be saved by him at last. Let conscience now speak (if thou beest not given up to a Reprobate sense) were this becoming the Holy God, and Rector of the World? No, God will not resign his Government, or revoke the Constitution of his Gospel for thee. I know here it pinches, but thou wilt find it true, wherefore flatter not thy self with the hopes of the contrary, but consider, and set thy self to the Work and Duty God calleth thee unto.

Yet

Yet further, let it be reminded, which hath been laid down before, and is proper for thee here to make uſe of, that tho thou art a Sinner, and mayeſt as yet have no ground of pretence to Gods favour, yet art thou not in a remedileſs Eſtate. The firſt Tranſgreſſion concludes thee not. Here then is infinite Mercy, that on any terms thou mayeſt be reſtored to a ſtate of Acceptance with God, which thou hadſt once forfeited; that thou haſt another caſt for Eternity: it was not ſo with the Angels that fell, *Jud.* 6. Here is then a foundation of encouragement: There is forgiveneſs with God for thee, that he may be feared by thee. Thou art a *Priſoner in the pit, wherein is no water*, no refreſhment, Zech. 9. 11. *Yet a Priſoner of hope through the blood of the covenant*, v. 12. Chriſt died for thee, and God is propitious towards thee on his ſcore; he can with ſafety to his Honour, and the repute of his law be juſt and righteous, and yet pardon thee, and receive thee to favour, *Rom.* 3. 25, 26. on the terms propoſed to thee; ſo runs the preamble of our Miniſterial Commiſſion, and that which in the firſt place we are to declare, To wit, *that*

God

God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their treſpaſſes unto them, 2 Cor. 5. 19. that is, as to the *Impetration* thereof, doing what belonged to him, as to ſo much as concerned the ſufficiency of the ranſom toward an actual Reconciliation, whereupon our Embaſſage is bottomed, *v.* 20. I don't ſay that thou art immediately to believe thy ſins to be forgiven thee; for that may be a lye, and is ſo, if thou feareſt not God: Nor do I ſay, that thou art bound only to believe that there is forgiveneſs with God for them that do, or ſhall fear him; for they are then actually forgiven; but that there is forgiveneſs with him for thee, *i. e.* a readineſs to pardon, antecedently to thy fear of him, as the motive to it, whether thou finally accepteſt, or refuſeſt it, or the terms of it; *trampling under foot the Son of God, and deſpiſing the blood of the covenant*, Heb. 10. 29. Defeating thy ſelf of his advantage, ſtill there was forgiveneſs with him for thee; otherwiſe, he would not have ſent to thee an Embaſſage of Reconciliation, or therein have preſcribed his fear unto thee, in order

der to it; that ſtumbling-ſtone is therefore removed out of thy way.

Yea moreover, ſo ſure it is, that the belief of the Atonement made for thee by the Sacrifice of Chriſt, ſo far as to render God appeaſable towards thee, *Joh.* 3. 16. as alſo the belief of thy actual acceptance with him on the ſame ſcore, *Eph.* 1. 6. So ſoon as thou ſhalt entertain the terms, or receive and embrace the atonement, *Rom.* 5. 11. Is now become the leading condition of the Goſpel, and indiſpenſibly neceſſary to life, firſt to be admitted as true, and worthy of all acceptation, before any farther treaty with thee can be had touching thy acceptance with God; it behoveth thee therefore to mind it.

The fear of God, and working righteouſneſs, compriſeth all the reſt that God doth require of thee. *We pray you in Chriſts ſtead, be ye reconciled to God,* 2 Cor. 5. 2. Thy ſins may have been as ſcarlet and crimſon, of a dye or tincture on the account of ſome aggravating circumſtances greatly inhauncing their nature and demerit; but *come now, ſaith the Lord, for all that, and let us reaſon together,*

gether, Isa. 11. 18. Say not, *wherewith shall I come before the Lord? Will he be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of Rivers of Oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression?* Mic. 6. 7. No, God has found a ransom. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth he require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* v. 8. to fear him, and obey him.

First then, if thou wouldest begin at the right end, look to get thy Heart and Soul possessed with the fear of God, that is the very beginning of Wisdom, as it imports a thorough change, habitually determining the whole man toward God and Holiness. Here lies the root of the matter; without it nothing can be referred to God, or be truly Religious; some partial and superficial Change or Reformation may be had, or attained unto, and something effected or done more than formerly; but nothing without it, that may denominate thee a righteous Person. Nay, it's ten to one, but that at one time or other, thou wilt get loose again from thy convictions and restraint,

ſtraint, whilſt thou roweſt againſt the ſtream and tide of thy native inclination, tugged on by a kind of force from without thee, deſtitute of the Spirit, without the new Nature, or any holy diſpoſition or tendency towards God. *Thy goodneſs will be but as a morning cloud, and as the early dew will it go away*, Hoſ. 6. 4. and in the mean while thou liveſt not to God, as the Apoſtle expreſſeth it, *Rom.* 6. 11.

In the next place, look to thy walk, thy fruits; That they be *the fruits of righteouſneſs, which are by Jeſus Chriſt, to the glory and praiſe of God*, Phil. 1. 11. *The wicked muſt forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord, or there is no mercy for him*, Iſa. 55. 7. Be exhorted then in the fear of God, *that thou putteſt off concerning thy former converſation, the old man, with its deceitful luſts, and let thy converſation witneſs thee to have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs*, Eph. 4. 22, 24. Talk not of thy heart, or good meanings towards God, whilſt the Fleſh, the World, and the Devil have thy ſervice. *Know ye not, that to whom ye yield your ſelves ſervants*

vants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, Rom. 6. 15. *Herein the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil: whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God*, 1 John 3. 10.

For a motive or argument enforcing the word of Exhortation, take that of the Text. Thy acceptance with God, or eternal Rejection by him, is immediately suspended thereon; be not deceived in this point. *See, I have set before thee this day, life and good, and death and evil: in that I command thee this day, to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments*, Deut. 30. 15, 16. *The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it*, v. 14. (this was the voice of the Gospel to lapsed man, *Rom.* 10.6,8.) *The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God, with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, that thou mayest live*, v. 6. The two Tables of the Law did ever enter the Covenant of Life struck with fallen man; termed thence *the Tables of the Testament or Covenant*, Chap. 9. 11. made with *Israel* in the Blood of Christ,

in

in the Type, *Exod.* 24. 7. *Psal.* 103. 17, 18. Thou art inexcusable who ever thou art, if ever thou didst read in the Bible, or hear the sound of the Gospel, and hast taken no notice of this, That Godliness hath the promise of the Life to come, and that without it no man shall see the Lord, or find Acceptance with him. It's then a matter of no small moment unto thee, whether thou obeyest the call of God this day unto thee, or not. Thy Soul lies at stake on it; thou hast the promise of God on the one hand, to invite and encourage thee; if but thy own Life, eternal Life, may bear any weight with thee, till thou beest capable of seeing something higher. Is Gods favour not worthy acceptance or regard, when in it is Life? Again, on the other hand, if thou wilt none of the fear of the Lord, *Prov.* 1. 29. to cleave to him, and serve him, he will be thy fear, and thy dread another day, whether thou wilt or no, to thy confusion, *v.* 7. when thou wouldest be glad to have a hiding place in the Rock, or to lye buried in the dust, *for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majesty,*

Isa.

Isa. 2. 10. be thy greatness now what it will, *Rev.* 6. 15. *For the great day of his wrath to come, and who shall be able to stand?* v. 17. *The sinners in* Zion *are afraid, fearfulness hath surprized the hypocrites; who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire, who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?* Isa. 33. 14. *He that walketh righteously, &c.* v. 15. None other shall dwell on high, but *their heart shall meditate terror,* Heb. 18. 12, 13.

Nor do thou cheat thy self here, in the hopes that the righteousness of Christ shall excuse thee, or stand thee in stead to answer the demands of the Gospel, requiring of thee the fear of God, and the personal righteousness whereof we have been speaking. Christ hath answered the demands of the Law of Works; but where doest thou read that he was substituted in thy room or stead, to Believe, to Repent, to Love and Fear God, and work Righteousness, or obey the Gospel, so as to render thee capable of acceptance with God unto Life without them? No, it's of thee that the Gospel requireth all this, as the condition of thy interest

tereſt in, or title to the advantages of the purchaſe of Chriſt, *Heb.* 5. 9. *Ch.* 9. 15. And if thou faileſt, or falleſt ſhort of this Goſpel-righteouſneſs, thou art wholly left remedileſs for ever; there is no third Covenant to relieve thee againſt the demands of the Goſpel, 2 *Theſ.* 1. 7, 8. *Heb.* 2. 3. Chriſt came into the World to lay a foundation for the love and fear of God, and obedience to him; not to render it unneceſſary to his favour; mind therefore thy Duty, and look up to God for help, *Hoſ.* 13. 9. and forget not to have an eye unto Chriſt alſo, as the Spring and Fountain of that Grace thou yet wanteſt, *Eph.* 2. 10. *Phil.* 1. 11.

Obj. *Here it may be thou mayeſt after all that hath been ſaid, be objecting and reaſoning thus within thy ſelf, What I muſt do to be accepted with God, and eternally ſaved, I know, that is out of queſtion with me. But what ſhall I do for the* Grace *enjoyned me to have*, whereby I may ſerve the Lord acceptably with reverence and godly fear? *Heb.* 12. 28. *How is this poſſible unto me? Here my feet ſtick as in the miry clay. Some Conviction*

of the Truth I have, but like one in a Fever; I know my thirst after sin and flesh-pleasing is my Disease, and that if it proceeds, it will prove mortal to me; but for all that, I can't quench it, nor resist its importunity. An Alienation from God, and strict Godliness, I find rooted in my mind, and the Flesh preponderating me the other way, notwithstanding my Conviction, and the various Impressions I struggle under. What now shall I do? so far forth as Grace is possible to me, so far is it possible for me to be saved, and no further. To say, That God can change my Nature, and dispose me to his Fear, is true; but nothing to my case, whilst he doth it not. Is it attainable by me in any means using, so as that it must lye at my door, if I have it not? If it be so, let me know what the Gospel saith, if any Constitution there be, any Treaty with lapsed man concerning it. Whether there be any promise thereof on any terms ever once made, or any thing that lies before me to be done in order to it, ascertaining it to me in the use of means, without which I may be remediless for ought that I know, or is revealed, without any relief by the Gospel; what hope is there left? Jer. 10. 12.

Ans.

Ans. To press upon the Sinner the necessity of the new Creature, or change of the frame and temper of his Spirit, and course of his Life, without any motive of incouragement respecting the possibility of attaining to it, can only perplex, not at all relieve him, I grant; supposing it every way absolutely impossible unto him. No Argument can rationally be pleaded to urge thereunto in such case, nor could any mans heart reproach him for the not having of it.

Nor will that well-meant Distinction, of a *Natural* and *Moral* Impotency, or *Impossibility* rather, help out here; the meaning whereof is no more, than that man notwithstanding the entrance of sin, is not destitute of any *natural* Faculty, Power or Capacity, to the Reception of Grace, or the Exercise of it; but is *morally* only incapacitated unto it, *i. e.* from an *insuperable* Aversation thereunto, and *Propension* to the contrary, rooted in the Mind and Will. Hence it's said, that since mans Impotency or Incapacity of turning unto God, and working Righteousness, is not such, as that he *cannot* if he would; but consists rather in this,

that he *Wills* it not, he affects not to be Holy: that is no excuse therefore, why he is not changed; for that it's what he *chuses*; he might be better if he would. He has the *natural* Power, or possibility unto it, tho not the *moral*.

This distinction has its use, but it reaches not the Solution of the present Difficulty. It shews indeed where the Disease lies, namely, in the *elective* Powers of the Soul; not barely in its executive Power, but in the first Digestion rather; and imports no more but that man is yet *habile subjectum*, a subject capable of having Grace, (and so he is of spotless Perfection;) he is not destitute of any natural Faculty, that is, he is man still, with his faculties of vital Power, Reason, and Will; but wants the well-disposedness only of them, that for all that, he can't be a good man. But the Objection is of the *thick* acts of the Mind and Will, *viz.* whether the unregenerate man can obtain of himself, *simply*, to desire or favour the things of God, or to will and to do what is well-pleasing in his sight, without the Divine help, *supervening*

rating his natural Faculties, healing their Distemper, and new disposing and determining them towards God and Holiness. This in the Objection is supposed, and that truly, to be *immediately* impossible unto him, and in the Solution by the former Distinction to be *morally* so; and why not *naturally* also? Since the disaster is not only now *congenite* to fall'n man, but withal, according to the Institution of Nature, it's *naturally* impossible for the mind or will, tillit be first rectified and changed, to exert, or put forth any act in the mean while, against its radicated *insuperable* Inclination, or unto which it's destitute of any Principle, Aptitude or Disposition, as for the *Ethiopian* to change his Skin, as the Prophet expresses it, *Jer.* 13. 23. And if this be so, and no more can be answered or said; still the difficulty remains, what Obligation man can justly have to a new Law introduced, binding him to a natural impossibility, (or call it moral, it comes to the same) or what relief the new Covenant can design, in proposing and enjoyning happiness unto Sinners, whilst the terms are impossible (not to God, but)

but) to them, as to ſtop the courſe of the Sun in the Firmament. How is this a Law of Grace to them, if it be ſo?

But in Anſwer to the Objection, and for the further vindicating of the Truth, I muſt here diſtinguiſh between that which is *mediately* and *ultimately* poſſible to the Creature, or impoſſible, and what is *nextly* and *immediately* ſo. In the latter Senſe, in the caſe of *Naaman* the *Syrian*, 2 *Kin.* 5. the cure of his Leproſie was to him abſolutely impoſſible, nor could any one elſe but God do it, *v.* 7. It was a Miracle; (and no leſs power is neceſſary to the cleanſing away the Leproſie, and Contagion of Sin) but in the former Senſe, *viz.* in the uſe of the means, or direction given him by the Prophet, *v.* 10. by the force of Gods Promiſe notified to him, it was more than poſſible to him. His recovery was equally within his Power, as was his waſhing ſeven times in *Jordan*. Yea, and if he was not recovered, it lay peremptorily at his door, and it was ten to one that it proved not ſo, *v.* 13. And yet, when the cure was done, for all that he did his part; yet in his Conſcience he could not but

aſcribe

aſcribe it in the whole, unto the ſole Power and Goodneſs of God, to a Conviction thereof beyond whatever he had before, *v.* 15, 17. ſo is the caſe here, and the Application to it is eaſie.

More particularly and plainly, for I am not here diſputing; if thou beeſt in earneſt, whoever thou art that objecteſt thus within thy ſelf; let me come yet cloſer up to thee. And firſt let it be reminded, which in the Objection is ſuggeſted. (1.) That thou ſtandeſt at preſent convinced of the abſolute neceſſity of a change of thy Heart and Life, (the whole need not the Phyſitian) and that without it the favour of God is unattainable by thee. (2.) That without the Divine help, illuminating thy mind, and renewing it, altering the Biaſs and Inclination of thy Will, and implanting the fear of God in thy heart, thou can'ſt not diſpoſe thy ſelf unto holineſs; this thou art ſenſible of, and the Scriptures ſpeak the ſame, and directs thee to look up to God for it, *Joh.* 6. 44, 45. *Rom.* 8. 7. *Acts* 5. 31. *Eph.* 2. 10. *Phil.* 2. 13. 2 *Tim.* 2. 25. *Jam.* 1. 17, 18. hold thee then there. (3.) How pleaſant ſoever Sin

may as yet be to thee, and hard to part with, (if thou wilt speak out) how uneaſie ſoever the yoke of Chriſt may ſeem to thee, who wert never as yet accuſtomed unto it: Yet knowing it to be thy diſeaſe, and reflecting on the danger of it; thou ſayeſt, that thou art not averſe to be healed. Thou knoweſt the Will of God, and art ſo far enlightened, as to have ſome taſt of his good Word, and approveſt the things that are more excellent: Take heed then of going back again this ſtep toward Converſion. Some are moſt deſperately bent againſt it, and averſe to any treaty about it. *They have refuſed to return*, Jer. 5. 3. by a poſitive act of their will. *Wo unto thee, O Jeruſalem, wilt thou not be made clean? when ſhall it once be?* Ch. 13. 27. Matt. 23. 37. that is not abſolutely thy caſe. (4.) Thou art ſenſible that God, *de novo*, enjoyns thee to fear him, and walk uprightly before him, in order to his favour, notwithſtanding thy former forfeiture, and that he knoweth perfectly thy preſent frame, and what can poſſibly be expected from thee. He commands thee to *circumciſe thy heart to love*

and

and to fear him, Deut. 10. Yea, *to make thee a new heart, and a new spirit*, Ezek. 18. to be a new man; and that under a new Penalty, and more fore than was that of the Law of Innocency, *Heb.* 2. 3. and 10. 29. But withal, declaring his hearty willingneſs rather that thou ſhouldeſt repent and turn to him, than periſh under that double guilt for thy not doing it, 2 *Pet.* 3. 9. 1 *Tim.* 2. 4. So, in the ſame verſe, where he exacts this return at thy hands, *Ezek.* 18. 31, 32. *For, why will ye dye?* This may reflect ſome light unto thee, by the way.

Now that it may appear to thy own Senſe and Conſcience, that the Holy and Gracious God doth not mock thee in all this, but intends thy relief in it, if thou beeſt not deficient unto thy ſelf in what is poſſible to thee, from what thou haſt already received, and the help he affordeth thee; know yet further,

1. That he hath inſtituted or appointed means of Grace, and hath vouchſafed the ſame unto thee, *Prov.* 1. 21, 22. I ſpeak here of *God's* means, which are the Inſtrument of the *principal* efficient in Converſion; thou haſt the Word of

God to attend unto, the appropriate means unto it. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple*, Psal. 19. 7. It's the Seed of the new Birth, *Jam.* 1. 18. the Spirit of God co-operating with it, *Joh.* 6. 63. whereof the Gospel is the Ministration, 2 *Cor.* 3. 8. *Rom.* 10. 14. *Hearken unto me*, saith the Psalmist, *and I will teach you the fear of the Lord*, Psa. 34. 11. *I have sent also my servants the prophets unto you, rising up early, and sending them*, &c. Ezek. 35. 15. Gods prescience of the event, that the means will not alway attain the end, hinders not, but that he will use it as ordained to it, and it will go for a cost that he hath been at, that the Sinner will be accountable for, if it be lost. *What should have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done?* Isa. 5. 4. Matt. 11. 20, 21. Isa. 48. 18.

2. Moreover, God has made a Law or Covenant obligatory unto man, with respect unto his conferring, or denial of Grace to him, a proper establishment about it, which comes home to thy case.

Neither

Neither do I mean here, Gods absolute Promise of giving Grace unto some, or to write his Law in their hearts, *Jer.* 31. 33. *Heb.* 8. 10. *Rom.* 11. 27. *Isa.* 59. 21. which belongs to his will of purpose only, or his Decrees; and is termed his Covenant in an improper sense. That belongs only to the elect, and amounts not to a promise claimable by all, or any singular person in particular. It's indeed directive, whither to go for help, and from whom all grace is to be received; but the purpose of God revealed that he will give it to some indefinitely, is extrinsical to the nature of a Law; it's not mans fault that he is not the object of such absolute promise, nor shall it be the rule of Gods Judgment, when he shall be condemned for his failing of the Grace of God, whereof we are enquiring, *Heb.* 12. 15, 17.

The Law of God, respecting the restoring of the Soul of man unto his lost Image (without which he can't be happy) consists of three parts. The Precept, the Promise, and the Threat.

1. For the *Preceptive* part. It can't be denied, but that something in the way of

Duty

Duty is incumbent on the Sinner, to the end, that he may be converted and healed, and this is his means to be used in order to it; and may be reduced to two heads (1.) Something respecting God more immediately as the Author of Grace, or the giver of it; such are the reading of the Scriptures, attending on the ordinances of God, especially the Ministry of the word, *Rom.* 10. 17. and Prayer unto God by Christ, *Isa.* 55. 6. frequenting good company, *&c. Pro.* 13. 20. God commandeth that the Creature meeting him, *quantum in se*, so far as in it lieth, in the way of his Grace. *There is none that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee*, Isa. 64. 7. (2.) Something respecting the subject to be wrought upon, as namely, the avoiding of those Sins, which it's capable of a restraint from, and which in their own nature tend to increase the habitual strength of Sin by custome, and to render Conversion more difficult, this God commands; And withal, to come up to those Duties of Justice, Mercy, countenancing and following after that which is honest and good, in the due improvement of every Talent received,

and

and which in its own nature is dispositive unto a change yet further, (tho not *gradus in re*, any degree as yet in that which is saving) as a body organized is in a nearer Disposition to be animated with a rational Soul, than a meer lump of Clay. This God requires by Precept of man, in order to his recovery to Grace and Holiness, that is savingly such, that he be in the way of it.

Now, what of all this is impossible unto thee, who makest the Objection? Nature is presupposed to Morality; and whilst God sustaineth thy being, and supplies thee with his common influences, *Act.* 17. 28. this thou can'st do.

Mans Capacity unto the Reception of Grace, or Renovation unto the Image of God, is not meerly *Logical* or *Obediential*, like to that of a Stock or a Stone, (tho in some sense worse) as hath been said. He hath still his natural Faculties abiding, rendring him immediately susceptible of it, and it is but their rectitude, or new well-disposedness unto Holiness. And consequently, also he can use his Faculties which are reasonable, with design for the bettering of his estate,

in

in the way of Gods Ordination, and can do something in order to it, *Mar.* 12. 34. *Luke* 13. 24.

Neither yet is all the Ignorance of men invincible, nor all their Averſation unto the ways of God and Holineſs inſuperable. The mind can reflect, and fetch in Intelligence of the danger; it can conſider, and keep guard: More violence can men uſe with themſelves than they do, *Iſa.* 44. 19. their *cannot* here, is no more or other than that of his who ſaid he could not riſe, and give his Friend, *Luke* 11. 7. that is, he could not without ſome difficulty, and great unwillingneſs, get his mind to it; who yet upon his importunity did do it, *v.* 8. All mankind have *recognized* this Power in their Conſtitution of human Laws againſt moral Impieties. No juſt Law can be made that ſhould bind men to moral Impoſſibilities, or to what is not within the Power of any one, till he be firſt regenerated, and in a ſtate of Salvation. No man doth think but that when Malefactors are found guilty, and adjudged to Penalties for their Crimes, they might, and could have done otherwiſe, and we

know

know it is so. In short, thou can'st consider thy Condition, and Reason about it; thou can'st Hear, Read, Pray, give Alms, and come up to the external Acts of Religion, both Personal, Family, and Publick; and can'st forbear this or that act of gross Sin, such as Murder, Theft, Adultery, Lying, Cheating, Swearing, Drunkenness, &c. men short of saving Grace have done it, and may do it, through the knowledg also and belief of the Lord, and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 *Pet.* 2. 20. and yet be again intangled in the same Pollutions of the World, if they look not to it, v. 22. *Mat.* 19. 20. Yea, and further, whenever God changeth or converteth any one, it's in a way congruous to his Nature, and the Soul goes along in the exercise of its Faculties, which it had before; like as when our Saviour was about to cure the man of his withered hand, *Mat.* 12. he bids him stretch it forth; and not without reason might he be bidden lift at it, for that he had the first Power and Faculty of it, and he must essay, whilst Ommpotency healed the indisposition of the Organ, and produced the effect. Still something in the way of

Duty

Duty (yet not impossible to the Creature) is enjoyned thee in order to thy cure, if thou wilt be made whole. Yea, and thou must work, if ever thou expect it God to help thee to will, or to do, *Phil.* 2. 12, 13.

2. Nor is there a bare command, but withal there is a promise of Grace connected with the forementioned precepts, either expressed or implyed; which constituteth it a Covenant, and alone renders the former Duties complied with, proper means to be used by us, unto Grace. *To him that hath, shall be given*, saith our Saviour, *Luke* 8. It's accommodated to the parable of the sower, and brought in as a reason inforcing the caution given by him to take heed how they hear, *v.* 18. And again, *take therefore the Talent from him*, Mat. 25. 28. *for unto every one that hath, shall be given*, v. 29. that is, to everyone that rightly useth, or improveth his Talent received, will God give more; *in diverso genere*, it must be meant of the Communication of saving Grace that the promise speaks, as is evident in the main scope of the Parable. It's past doubt, that the wicked and slothful Servant

was

was condemned for the want of Truth of Grace, or of that, which had it been gained, had been rewardable with eternal Life; if not, his case had been the same, he had perished notwithstanding: If so, his Plea is considerable, and no man can object more: *I knew thee, Lord, saith he, that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sowen, gathering where thou hast not strawed*, v. 24. q. d. If I am sentenced for the not gaining or having that, the Seed or Power whereof was never once personally given unto me; the which he alledgeth himself before to have been aware of, and therefore was discouraged or afraid, but could not help it: See now the Answer, *Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the Exchangers*, i. e. have improved the Talent I betrusted thee with, and then thou shouldest have gained that, for the want of which I now doom thee as an unprofitable Servant, like to that, *Luk.* 16. 11. *If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous Mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*

Yet further, that it is the Duty of all men to seek the Lord, and to pray unto him

him for Grace, is out of all question; but whoever cometh to God, is expresly obliged to believe, not only that he is, *but that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, Heb. 11. 6. without which no foundation or motive of incouragement doth remain. Now Faith can't stand alone without a bottom; what warrant can any man have to believe in such a case, that which God hath not promised? Either they have Gods word for it, or they can't be bound to believe it. Faith is an assent upon Testimony, that is its *formal* Nature; and the thing testified, namely, that God is a rewarder, (yea, in the very case in hand, *Luke* 11. 10.) doth not transcend the faculty of the natural Man, to yield his assent thereunto, as the foundation of his Application unto God for the Grace that he wants. *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him*, Jam. 1. 5. *but let him ask in Faith*, v. 6. *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you: cleanse your hands ye Sinners*, Jam. 4 8. most expres is that, Prov. 2. 3, 4, 5. *If thou criest after knowledg,*

knowledg, and lifteſt up thy voice for underſtanding, &c. *then ſhalt thou underſtand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledg of God.* The fear of God is the thing in my Text required unto his favour. And here the Diſpenſation thereof is made conditional, and the tenor of the new Covenant, with reſpect thereunto expreſſed. As alſo in the former Chapter, on the ſame foot of account; it's put upon every mans election or choice, and laid there that they do not fear God, *Ch.* 1. 29. for that they wanted not aſſurance of help from God, *v.* 23. if they had not rejected it, and diſregarded his methods unto it, *v.* 25.

3. There is moreover a Threat belonging to this Conſtitution. It's no bare Counſel, but has the force of a Law, which ſerves further to confirm what is before aſſerted. Every Threat doth virtually include a promiſe to the contrary, in any eſtabliſhment. The Precept in Conjunction with the Sanction, in caſe of diſobedience, Gen. 2. 17. *For in the day thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt ſurely dye*; is all that we have upon Record, touching the firſt Covenant eſtabliſhed with

with man. Yet, is it hence concluded, that a promise of Life unto *Adam*, in case he continued in his obedience, cannot be doubted; for that it must be certainly, tho tacitly included in the Threat.

The Commination or Threat here is the denial of Grace, a Dereliction of God, a judicial blinding and hardening, the taking away of former Talents misimproved, and leaving the Soul in an after incapacity of Grace, as now past it. How full is the Scripture in this point? *From him shall be taken away, even that he hath*, Mat. 13. 12. *lest at any time they should be converted, and I should heal them*, v. 15. When God commands the use of means in order to the further communication of his Grace unto men, that they do what they can do: If now they will not seek unto God, but set themselves down in a supine sloth and negligence, at best; or speaking evil of those things which they know not: what they know naturally, as brute Beasts, in those things they will corrupt themselves, as *Jude* speaks; affronting the Divine Majesty, grieving his Spirit, resisting it, *Act.* 7. 51. debauch-

debauching their own Consciences, and quenching the Spirit striving therein with them; then he threatens to give them up. *Israel would none of me: so I gave them up to their hearts lust*, Ps. 81. 12. *O that my people had hearkened to me*, v. 13. *God gave them over to a reprobate mind*, Rom. 1. v. 28. *that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*, 2 Thes. 2. 11, 12. *Now they are hid from thine eyes*, Luke 19. 42. *thy day is past. I will put a new Spirit within you*, Ezek. 11. 19. *but as for them, whose heart walketh after their abominations, I will recompence their way upon their own head*, v. 21. Zech. 7. 11, 13. *The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed, i. e. the ore is lost. Reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them*, Jer. 6. 29. *Thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee*, Ezek. 24. 12, 13. *My Spirit shall not always strive with man*, Gen. 6. 3.

It's true, that the Threat here doth not every way run parallel with the promise. In the Promise, God hath laid an Obliga-

Obligation on himself, when the Condition is performed. But the Threat carrieth in it but the nature of a penal Law, which in its due Construction, tho it obligeth the Sinner unto its Penalty in case of forfeiture; yet it bindeth not the Lawgiver unto Execution in such case. God has, as Supream Governour, for weighty Reason, reserved to himself his Prerogative Royal, as to the Execution of the Threat, (and the timing of it, when he doth it) as was hinted in the opening of the Text. Sometimes he has foretold that he will, and we find actually that he hath stept out of the course of his standing Law, and prevented some in the way of discriminating Mercy, *Act.* 9. 14, 15. (without wrong to any other in the like circumstances) whose undoubted right it is, to have in his disposal some special grace and favour, (which no mortal but has) to bestow on whom he pleases: according to that noted saying of *Prosper*, *Deus neminem deserit*, &c. God leaves none, till they forsake him, and many such he often converts. But in the mean while, when ever he does it, the Sinner had no warrant to expect it, or to adven-

ture

ture on it, (which were to ſin, that way might be made for diſcriminating Grace to abound) no man has any ground to believe that God will convert him out of the way and method preſcribed unto him, in order to it. How many may have periſhed on that Preſumption, and that by their own wilful neglect; whilſt they well knew, that in the Communication of pardoning Grace and Acceptance unto Life, God hath not reſerved to himſelf any the like liberty of Superſedure, to ſave any one, who by a previous work of ſanctifying Grace on his Soul, is not afore prepared unto Glory, *Rom.* 9. 23, 24. and therefore it muſt be a madneſs to adventure it.

Now then, Soul, if that be ſo, and this be thy caſe, ſay now, whether God requireth any impoſſibility of thee? or whether no relief was indeed offered thee in the new Covenant grant? God has ſignified his willingneſs to admit of a conference with thee here, and to put it upon thy Conſcience, (he himſelf being Judg, touching the equality of his Ways, *Iſa.* 5. 3, 7. What incouragement more wouldeſt thou have, or what aſſurance touching

touching the possibility of thy attaining unto favour with God, or unto Grace in order to it? If then thou declinest the use of means, or every thing of duty required of thee, and persistest in those evils which thou can'st avoid, to provoke God to withdraw his help from thee; how can'st thou pretend thou wouldest be healed of thy Souls distemper, as thou suggestest, whilst yet thy own Conscience must subscribe to the righteousness of Gods Judgment in condemning thee, *eo nomine*, if thou accepteſt not deliverance? What had the foolish Virgins to say, that they have not Oyl in their Vessels? Was it not their own fault, *Mat.* 25. 9. Yea, and his mouth was muzled, as it is in the *Greek*, that was challenged for not having on the Wedding-garment, *Mat.* 22. 12. he had nothing to say for himself. Can'st thou think that thy Conscience will not reproach thee in Hell, for sinning against real mercy and kindness, and for thy neglect of so great Salvation, if thou beest not converted and healed? Will not thy non-deliverance from wrath to come, thinkest thou, lie justly at thy own door by the Gospel? Can'st thou

say,

say, that thou wert left remediless under the first Apostacy? No, *let God be true, but every man a liar*, Rom. 3. 4. *God is not unrighteous, who taketh vengeance*: the worm that shall not dye, will one day attest to it.

Let me then reassume the Exhortation, in the Apostles words, 2 Cor. 6. 1. *We then as workers together with him, beseech you, that you receive not the Grace of God in vain*; comply with the offer of acceptance with him. Endeavour after the fear of God, and work righteousness, which are the terms of it. Man is the immediate formal efficient of it, not God; therefore essay it, use the means to it, and look up to God for help. *I have heard* Ephraim *bemoaning himself thus, turn thou me, Lord, and I shall be turned*, Jer. 31. 18. so do thou, and do it speedily, as the Apostle subjoyns in the forementioned place, v. 2. *Now* is the accepted time, behold now is the day of Salvation. So say I, set upon the work now, without delay. *While* it's called to day, saith the Author to the *Hebrews*, lest any of you be hardened thro' the deceitfulness of Sin, *Ch.* 3. 13. Sin is of a charming nature, and has its subtil insi-

nuations to keep its poſſeſſion; and that of the Preſumption of an after repentance or change, which ſhall be time enough, is none of the leaſt of its deceits, or the leſs dangerous, when (1.) life is its ſelf ſhort and uncertain. What a vanity and cheat then is it, to diſpoſe of that time, which no man is ſure to enjoy, and that for the doing a work, which if death comes before, he is remedileſly undone for ever. (2.) It's not Gods method to Convert men at the laſt hour. If it were ſo, what would become of his Glory in this world? It would invert the order of his Government. Sick-bed repentances are ſeldom true. After Relapſes do daily evince it. One or two Rare inſtances on the other hand, are not to be drawn into conſequence, to ſecure men of acceptance with God at laſt, in the neglect of his fear, and their continuance in the ſervice of the Fleſh, the World, and the Devil, till the laſt point of time. (3.) Sin continued in, and this change put off, argueth, the one for the preſent to be rather choſen, and the other nauſeated. And then to morrow and next day is likely to be as bad with thee, and worſe than to day. This procraſtination

tion tends to further hardning in ſin; as in the Text before named. (4.) That this Heart-change is the gift of God, in order to his Favour, thou confeſſeſt, and inſiſts upon; why then art thou not afraid that for thy putting off the work which he enjoyns thee to day, and not anſwering to his preſent call and overtures of Grace, in complying with the methods of it, that he ſhould execute his threat, and ſeal thee up to obduration? It may be thy caſe before thou art aware of it: *Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near*, Iſa. 55. 6. *then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me*, Prov. 1.28. *becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed*; v. 24. *for that they hated knowledg, and did not chuſe the fear of the Lord*, v.29. take heed that thou doeſt not rue it when it be too late. Time may be left, and yet the ſeaſon be loſt, *Luk.* 19 42.

(2.) The other branch of the exhortation is unto all thoſe who truly fear God, and hope to be found righteous before him. Do you continue to walk in his fear, and more and more to abound in the fruits of righteouſneſs; more particularly

cularly in those that have been instanced in, which were so Characteristical in *Cornelius*. Pray alway, look to the Soul concernments of all under your charge; let Gods Name be Recorded in your Families, that they may be Nurseries for Religion, and give hopes for posterity. Be kind, and merciful, like unto your Heavenly Father. Keep up the repute of Religion, by an exact Conversation that may be convincing. And let it appear not so much in a zealous pursuit of some singular walk or opinion, as in the more weighty things of the Law, wherein all that fear God must be agreed, and wherein the men of the world have also some discerning, and are able to judg of a mans integrity; That they may not be tempted to conclude, that strict piety and conscience toward God, is a thing only verbally professed, and talkt of, but no where to be found. *Peter* gives an instance herein, of the prevalency of an exemplarary walk, even in women, tho the weaker Vessels. *That if any obey not the word, they also, i. e. their husbands may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chast conversation*

versation coupled with fear, 1 Pet. 3. 1, 2. *with the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price*, v. 4. so of Husbands also in their place; without which their prayers will be hindred, *v.* 7. what will any mans profession amount unto, without this?

Above all, if thou beest one who desires to be found faithful with God, and be kept steady in the way of Righteousness, look to preserve thy conscience tender, and to keep the fear of God always upon thy Soul, in the several instances before explained, wherein it doth consist; especially as it denoteth an awful fixation of the eye of the soul on him, or regard unto him in all thou doest, in the whole tract of thy life. *O fear the Lord, ye his saints*, Psal 34. 9. this is the root and spring of all obedience, and of the entireness of it, and that alone which will insure it, *Gen.* 22. 12. let the fear of God possess thy Soul, set him always before thee, call him to Record in all that thou undertakest, and it will preserve thy footsteps, that they shall not halt, nor slide. *Happy is the man that feareth always*, Prov. 28. 14. or *that is in the fear of the Lord all the day*

long, ch. 23. 17. *He walketh surely.* If the fear of God, (which hath alway an attemperation of love in it, as was opened) once begin to languish, or a forgetfulness of him begins to creep upon thy Soul, sin will soon invade thee, and thou wilt fall into a decay. Thou art already withering at the root. Take heed of Relapses. *If you call on the father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every mans work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear*, 1 Pet. 1. 17. *Perfecting holiness in the fear of God*, 2 Cor. 7. 1. this is the whole design of the Gospel, *Tit.* 2. 11, 12. hereby is God honoured, *Mal.* 1. 6. and without it, the design of our blessed Saviour were fruftrated in his redemption of mankind; which was to retrieve, and bring back the fear of God, and working righteousness into the world; that God might not lose the homage of all his whole Family on earth at once, by the Apostacy, 1 *Pet.* 1. 18.

Once more, to inforce the exhortation, let the Argument in the Text yet further be weighed, and considered. Thy acceptance with God here and hereafter, is suspended thereon by the Gospel. God will

secure

ſecure his own Glory, and has done it, by the ſame method that he hath done thy happineſs.

Acceptance with God, as was opened, is a continued act; and ſo is the condition whereon it is ſuſpended, as the Scriptures do abundantly teſtify. It is ſo in the promiſe, with which it is Connected. *There is no condemnation to them who are in Chriſt Jeſus*; but who may aſſume this to themſelves? *they who walk not after the fleſh, but after the ſpirit*, Rom. 8. 1. ſee *Gen.* 17. 1, 2. *Neh.* 1: 5. *Pſal.* 103. 18. 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. *Ch.* 6. 18, 19. *Rom.* 2. 6, 13. *Rev.* 22. 14. ſo it is in the threat of the Goſpel. *For if ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall die*, Rom. 8. 13. i. e. your juſtification, v. 1. ſhall be diſcontinued. *If we deny him, he alſo will deny us*, 2 Tim. 2. 12. *But if any man draw back, my ſoul ſhall have no pleaſure in him. But he that ſhall endure to the end, the ſame ſhall be ſaved*, Mat. 13. 13. not only the hazard of the loſs of thy inward peace, but of thy ſoul alſo, lies at ſtake, in caſe thou declineſt from the fear of God, or beeſt again intangled and overcome of thy luſts, and turneſt from the way of Righteouſneſs, and neglecteſt the holy Commandment

of God, according to that of the Prophet; *but when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned; in his sin that he hath sinned he shall die*, Ezek. 18.24. that is, if he be not renewed again to repentance, and amendment of life, or recovered from under his forfeiture. Here is that fear of God called for, which was spoken to in the opening of the Doctrine, namely, of his wrath in case of presumptuous sinning against him; which *David* was so concerned about, *Psal.* 19. 13. and for the guilt whereof, he had his bones broken and consumed, *Psal.* 51. 10. and 32. 4. *for thine hand was heavy upon me, and thy hand pressed me sore*, Psal. 38. 2. *There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin. My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness*, v. 3. 5. Psal. 42. 8. *all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me*, Psal. 42. 7. and 88. 7. his sin had sprung a leak, that the waters came into his Soul, as he elsewhere speaks. He might have ridden out any storm from without, if all had been right

right within; had not a Capital guilt lain at his door, a Covenant breach, 2 *Sam.* 12. and forfeiture of Gods complacential Love and Favour. *I remembred God, and was troubled*, Psal. 77 3. here was a sad change with him, who at other times could say, *how precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God, how great is the sum of them*, Psal. 139. 17. when he kept his integrity, v. 24.

Obj. *But I have been taught, that faith alone is the condition of the new Covenant, and consequently, that acceptance with God is not suspended on his fear or any works of righteousness to be performed by the creature; besides, that the argument unto holiness from the hazard of Salvation, urged upon believers, seems to subvert the doctrine of the Saints Perseverance in the love and favour of God. The suspension of the arbitrary influences of Gods favour, or the hidings of his Face, a Saint may fear, upon foul miscarriages, but not the loss or suspension of acceptance with him, as if his pardon or title to life eternal could be discontinued thereby.*

Ans. The former part of the Objection is wholly resolved into the Doctrine of Justification by Faith *only*, as being

the ſame thing with acceptance with God, and the leading promiſe of the new Covenant, as it imports the remiſſion of ſins, and title to life everlaſting. What a Labyrinth art thou brought into, by thy not underſtanding the tenor of the Covenant? I appeal to thy own ſoul, whether when thou readeſt ſuch Scriptures as *Heb.* 12. 14. *Eph.* 5. 5. thou canſt ſhake off the fear of deſtruction, if thou wouldeſt, in caſe thou relapſeſt into ſuch ſins as there are threatned with death? If thou canſt, ſad is thy caſe: It's not every imperfection thou knoweſt, that by the Goſpel (however it is by the Law) is of ſo mortal a nature.

Nor doſt thou any where read in the Bible, that man is juſtified by Faith *only*, or alone, preciſely taken, and without any reſtriction; but thou mayeſt read the direct contrary, *Jam.* 2. 24. and in other words, *Luke* 13. 3, 5. However, I hope thou wilt hold to the common diſtinction of a *working* Faith; that it's neceſſary at leaſt to the Faith that juſtifieth, that is, worketh by ſincere obedience to all Gods Commands; that it's neceſſary to it as Faith, that it be no

dead

dead Faith, tho not *qua justificat*, as *justifying*. To avoid controversie then, in so momentous a point, I will come to them on thy own Principles, if thou wilt be true to them: I say, that we are not justified or accepted with God, nor do continue so to be, through Faith *only*, or alone, on our part, (however we are agreed that it is by Christ alone). Thou sayest that it is not by or through that Faith that is alone in the Subject; as that the fear of God, and working Righteousness is required *immediately* unto acceptance with God, or continuance in his favour, to qualifie the person for it? Then, that it is so required only to qualifie Faith, or to make it perfect, *Jam.* 2. 22. that it be no dead carkass; but still thou denyest not but that *mediately* it's indispensibly necessary to life, by the intervention of that Faith whereon alone thou sayest it is suspended. Accordingly then, if thou hast no other *standard* of Righteousness to measure thy *living* Faith by, than I have before insisted on, to measure and delineate the fear of God, and true Piety in any *person* by, the issue at last is brought to the same.

Now

Now then to come to the business; suppose thou shouldest neglect the fear of God, and not bring forth the fruits of Righteousness mentioned, or relapse into any one of those gross wickednesses enumerated by the Apostle, *Gal.* 5. 19. With καὶ τὰ ὅμοια, and such like, *v.* 21. that the flesh carrieth it in the combate against the Spirit, (which was none of *Paul's* own case, *Rom.* 7. he speaks not there of the perpetration of any gross sin; the thief can't say when he takes a purse, that it is no more he; that what he would not do, that he doth, *&c. v.* 17. 20.) Suppose, I say, the government *pro tempore*, of Grace to be suspended, and sin to usurp the rule and dominion for any time, notwithstanding the vanquished dissent of thy mind, to the presumptuous contrivement, and harbouring of some notorious impiety, which yet is no impossible supposition, if thou lookest not to it, as I might give instances once and again, were it a thing grateful to stay upon. What now wouldest thou think of thy condition in such case? Thou must say either, (1.) That the Faith which is *alone*, whether it worketh, or

not

not worketh, (if it be not lost) doth continue to justifie thee; or that *through* it rather, to speak in the Scripture dialect, thou continuest still justified, accepted, and meet for eternal life, tho it be no *operative* Faith; which is to eat thy own words. Or, (2.) that such works of Righteousness, as have been insisted on, or thy being cleansed from such sins as the Apostle gives a catalogue of; for the fruits of the flesh in its *regency* belong not to the *works* thou meanest, or the holiness or obedience which thou takest for necessary to qualifie or *inform* thy working faith, as not belonging to its *essential* Character: In the point of duty thou holdest them required; but that if they be wanting, and the flesh prevail, yet that at the same instant of time it's no *dead* Faith which thou hast, tho it worketh not as it should do, yet it doth so far as is necessary to thy Justification and acceptance with God: If so, here then thou speakest out. Or, (3.) If thou hast any misgiving that such fruits of Righteousness, brought forth in the fear of God, and abstinence from the contrary fruits of the flesh, do belong to the

Character

Character of a living working Faith, thou must grant, that if it be otherwise with thee, or should be thy case, thy Faith can't be it that will save thee; but that at such time being alone, thy title to acceptance with God will be suspended and *discontinued*, which is that I have been urging upon thee to consider, that thy Soul lies at stake upon thy obedience, as well now, as before thy reception to favour with God, (but to the continuance I have proved that they are), which as yet remains unshaken; and it therefore behoveth thee to look to it.

As for the other foot of the Objection, respecting the Saints Perseverance, that belongs to the Doctrine of Election, or the Decrees, which can never run cross to the standing Law of God neither. Know then, (1.) That such is the connexion between continuation in the fear of God, and working Righteousness, and continuance in his favour, and title to blessedness, that he has not decreed to preserve any one in the latter, without the former, 2 *Thes.* 2. 13. 1 *Pet.* 1. 5. and so runs his Law, *Joh.* 15. 10. *Ezek.* 18. 7. of which before. So that perseverance

rance in the *favour* of God, and his love of acceptance, and perseverance in *holiness*, run parallel, and there can be no pretence to the one, without the other. (2.) We have a law or establishment, which God hath made with his people, touching their preservation and progress in grace, which is to be attended unto. The dispensation of more grace and help in time of need, is *conditional* unto them, in and by the Gospel. There is no promise, no provision made in the Covenant of Grace struck with man, the administration whereof is absolute, to preserve any one from the greatest and most enormous sins, nor yet from Apostacy itself, if he attends not to the duty prescribed in order to it; nor hath God promised that he shall so do; Grace is in its own nature loseable; the best of men are mutable or defectible here; it's actuation, and conservation depends on new supplies from him that gave it, 2 *Cor.* 12. 9. which God communicates through Christ, who is become the head of influence, *John* 15. 4, 5. *Gal.* 2. 20. But the dispensation thereof is connected in the promise, with a diligent heeding and attending

attending on the duties prescribed in order to it, which man through the talents received, and help availing him, is in an immediate capacity unto; such are watching, 1 *Cor.* 16. 13. Prayer unto God, *Mark* 14. 38. *Unite my heart to fear thy name*, saith *David*, Psal. 86. 11. *and take not thy holy Spirit from me*, Psal. 51. 11, 12. To shake off sloth, and use diligence, *Heb.* 6. 11, 12. not to cater or provide for the flesh, *Rom.* 13. 14. to avoid the occasions of evil, and abstain from the appearance of it, and resist its first motions, 1 *Thes.* 5. 22. to put on and keep in use the whole armour of God, *Eph.* 6. 11. and in exercising his Grace received, *Job.* 5. 2. adding thereby Grace to Grace, with all diligence, 2 *Pet.* 1. 5. *If ye do these things, ye shall never fall*, saith the Apostle, *v.* 10. *i. e.* into your old sins, *v.* 9. which will blur your evidence for life, or stain your acceptance with God.

Hence it is, that the faithful are cautioned to take heed of falling, 1 *Cor.* 10. 12. *Heb.* 3. 13. and of Apostacy from God, *Heb.* 10. 25, 38, *&c.* in the diligent use of the means Connected with the promise

mise of their preservation, the which while some have attended, they have been in a flourishing posture God-ward, *Cantic.* 1. 2. *John* 3. 2. whilst other some have pined away, grace in them hath languished, and been ready to die, *Rev.* 3. 2. and they, if in a saved state, yet saved so as by fire, hardly, and not without loss, 1 *Cor.* 3. 15. and who might they thank but themselves? all is not to be resolved into the inevitable consequent of the Lapse, or first transgression. They might have helpt it. Nor doth the prerogative of God, here also reserved for the recovery of any one after Relapses, or preventing the same, in pursuance of his hidden purpose, derogate at all from this his standing law. No promise has God made on any other terms than as afore mentioned, *Jude* 20. 21, 23, 24. *Jam.* 4. 5, 6.

If then through any mans wilful neglect, as before, the precept of the law of grace becomes violated, I say again, the Sabbath on Earth takes place, without all respect of persons. If sin not only rebels, but proceeds for any time, or in any single instance, there's that is properly

properly against the Gospel, Βασιλεύειν, to Reign, or to Lord it, *Rom.* 6. 12. suspending the government of Grace; conscience it may be reniting, but served as the Prophet was by *Asa*, 2 *Chr.* 16. 10. put in prison for reproving him; acceptance with God, as hath been said, is that while suspended, be it in any one whomsoever. The Law of God, as it belongs to the first Covenant, condemns for every the least transgression of it, as well as the greatest; and the greatest is as pardonable, with respect thereunto, as the least is, by the Gospel, *Acts* 13. 39. But the Gospel relieves none, whilst they remain uncleansed from wickedness, *Ps.* 119. 1, 9. 1 *Cor.* 6. 9, 11. or that violate its own proper obligation.

This new Law of God is immutable, as stable as the Pillars of the Heavens, and of the Earth. What it once saith, it always saith, to any one whosoever. It's a most dangerous inlet to prophaneness, to suggest or harbour such a notion, that a believer (or converted let me add) is from under the threat of the Gospel, in case of disobedience to its commands (I mean the threat of eternal destruction, binding over the

person

perſon immediately to it, (or rather leaving him to the Law; not relieving him) tho it be not peremptory, ſave in the caſe of its finallity. The proper penalty of the Goſpel abides indeed only on the finally impenitent and diſobedient; and then it is remedileſs. *Non eſt diſtinguendum, ubi lex non diſtinguit.* Either the Goſpel threats no man with Excluſion out of the Kingdom of God, and of Chriſt, for ſuch acts of ſin as thoſe, *Eph.* 5. 5. or it doth all men. Either it never did, or ſtill it doth, after believing, as well as before. The Law is not changed, nor hath any man a patent of Exemption from under the Goſpel Sanction; or if any have, who is there, but will put in for it? Believers are as often cautioned in the caſe of Sin, to fear and take heed of ruin, as others are, as hath been before inſtanced in Scripture, *To look to themſelves, that they loſe not thoſe things they have wrought,* 2 Joh. 8. and *to hold that faſt which they have, that no man take their crown,* Rev. 3. 11, 21. to fear, not the way of ſin only, but themſelves, if they ſtart aſide into it, *Mat.* 10. 22, 28. 1 *Cor.* 3. 16, 17. as belonging to the true fear of God.

Neither doth all this, at all interfere with the Doctrine of perſeverance duely ſtated, which has its riſe and founda tion only in Gods decree; the Execution whereof is regulated by his ſtanding Law, or according to it. Gods purpoſe of beſtowing his favour in, or continuing of it to any one, is ſo far forth and no further, than as the ſubject ſhall according to his Law be found meet or competent for it. Every unconverted perſon is condemned,

condemned, notwithstanding Gods secret purpose to convert, or call some, that they may be justified. So his purpose to recover his elect from Apostacy, or lying in Sin, in order to their recovery to his favour, secureth none from forfeiture thereof in the mean while. Nor has he decreed that no elect person shall ever so fall as to forfeit it, and it were well that some mens heads were exercised less about the *Decrees*, and that they attended more to the *Law*. The Leper under the law, *Levit.* 14. upon his cleansing, atonement being made, was in *statu quo* restored to his rights, but not before. Nor was *Peter* upon his denial of Christ, till his particular repentance, or his new conversion, *Luke* 22. 32. the threat took place to put a bar in his way unto life, if Christ now believed, who expresly had told him that it would, *Mat.* 10. 33. and had he died without a change, (which yet the seed of God remaining did prepend towards) he had been undone. Whom God elects to the end, he does to the means, which may fully serve to remove that part of the objection out of the way, respecting the Saints perseverance.

And for what is further insinuated, touching believers obligation only to fear the hiding of Gods face, or loss of former peace, in case they relapse into conscience-wasting sins, it is obviated before in the doctrinal part. What the word of God threats in such a case, that is it they are called to fear, and that we have proved to be eternal destruction; the fear whereof is twofold, Either (1.) *Suppositive*, which is antecedent to any sin, and is required only to awe them from it

or

or prevent it. Such was *Jobs*, *chap.* 31. 23. and *Pauls*, 1 *Cor.* 9. 27. and such ought to have been *Davids* fear, and *Peters*, when no other motive or inducement of the Gospel unto holiness, could or did hold them fast to their duty. A manifold cord is not so soon broken. Love to God and Christ, is indeed the most genuine spring of obedience, but it may also well consist with this fear. Nay, it's an essential ingredient into the whole of that fear of God all along insisted on, love, I say, in sincerity, is so, *Eph* 6.24. Yea, and it must, under the same penalty of an *Anathama Maranatha*, 1 *Cor.* 16. 22. For, God will not leave his goverment *precarious*. He knows our frame, and what is necessary to us; we are not yet perfect as *Adam*, nay, much less confirmed. (2.) Or *Positive*, this is only under such relapses as intrench on sincerity, and is necessary in order to a recovery from under them; and imports the sense of present *actual* danger of destruction upon the fall into, and lying in such sin. And to admit the former to be a duty, but not this, is to grant the premisses, and then to deny the conclusion; to oblige a man to fear that, which when it comes, can't hurt him, nor touch him.

It is indeed the Prerogative of God, to create Peace in any Soul, *Is.* 57. 19. 2 *Thes.* 3. 16. and he may possibly for some time, vail the light of his countenance from an upright walker with him, that he may wrongfully conclude against himself, *Job* 33. 23, 24. *Is.* 50. 10. (which is not ordinary neither *Is.* 33. 17.) whilst God in and by his Gospel, speaks Life and Peace to him. And clear evidence, and strong consolation, is another thing;

thing; accompanying not alway the being and sincerity of Grace, but its growth, and gradual perfection, rendring it discernable, *Psal.* 92. 14. It's not the portion of the negligent unthrifty Christian however.

But our inquiry is not only about Consolation, but safety; not touching Gods arbitrary withdrawings, whilst his word speaks peace all that while, if the Soul could read it; but of what the Gospel speaketh; not of what the Soul will lose, but of what it ought not to keep, and of that *Active* fear which is necessary in the point of duty to it, in case of notorious decays or relapses. Shall we think that *David*, for instance, (not to name many others) under his blood-guiltiness, or whilst in the pursuit of it, 2 *Sam.* 11. 15. was indeed pardoned, but only wanted the sense thereof in his own Soul, as some distinguish? Or that the depths, or perplexity that his conscence might be cast into thereupon, before his return to God, *Psal.* 32. 3, 5. was only a dereliction, or on a misprision, or mistake; *God* not speaking peace to him, while his *word* nevertheless did? or that the arrows of God shot into his soul, *Psal.* 38. 2. were not pointed or sharpned with any word of his? Or that his fear of the lost of Gods favour must be but infidelity added to his former sin, and to fear where no fear was? who dare to think this?

Nor can the decree of God touching the recovery of his elect from such relapses, help out here, if that be thy case, who ever thus objectest; if as yet, thou art not humbled, nor brought back to God. That thou canst not at present have or keep any evidence of thy acceptance with God, all

do

do grant it impoſſible; and I have aſſigned the true reaſon thereof, from the tenor of his Covenant. Nor can'ſt thou now know that thou art elect, or be aſſured that thou wert once effectually called, nor conſequently that thou ſhalt ever be renewed again to repentance, whilſt thou art not in the way of it. Nor, which is more, thou art not ſure to live to another moment of time in order to it; ſay if thou beeſt aſſured of it. *David* was aware of this, when he cried unto God; *O ſpare me, that I may recover ſtrength before I go hence and be no more*, Pſ. 39. 13. he knew he was not fit to die; nor yet certain to live neither.

Diſmiſſing then the Objection, which I have thus largely anſwered, for that I have not found it by any fully ſpoken to, tho I have found the conſequent of it dangerous to many that have inſiſted on it. Let me once again exhort thee, if thou beeſt one who retaineſt the fear of God at the bottom, to walk in his fear, and to abound in the fruits of righteouſneſs, which is the juſt Character of one accepted with God. Caſt not off the Authority of his Law on the one hand to aw thee to it; on the other hand, account it not mercenary to lay hold of the promiſe of the Goſpel to encourage thee therein, even that of the Text, *Of acceptance with God.* Nor don't think that thou haſt no need of either; diligence in the exerciſe of Grace, is the only method preſcribed by God, for *the making thy calling and election ſure to thee*, 2 Pet. 1. 5, 10. No wonder if thou beeſt at a loſs about thy condition, and afraid to appear before God, if thou haſt been, or art neglective in the fear of him, and the fruits thereof, which

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have been insisted on. Acquaint thy self with God, keep the eye of thy soul fixed towards him; set him always before thee, in thy mind, as the rule and measure, the record and witness, the scope and end, the judg and final rewarder of all thy actions; always, that is habitually, as the Traveller thinketh of the place he is going unto, so often, (tho not every instant of time) as not to lose his way at any turning; and this fear will preserve thee in the path way of righteousness, and at length will safely conduct thee to blessedness, *Ps.* 37. 37, 37. Nor be discouraged at thy own weakness, or the rubs in thy way. For, *tho the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fall: they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength*, Is. 40. 31. they shall neither faint, fall, nor give over. I shall wind up all, in the words of the Preacher, *Eccl.* 12. 13, 14. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. God is no respecter of persons, &c.*

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